

By

NELL ST. JOHN MONTAGUE



Nell St John Montague

Revelations of a Society Clairvoyante

BY

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DEDICATION

TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF MY SON
CHARLES STANDISH-BARRY
4TH BATT. THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT;
AND TO
MARCELLA AND BUNTY
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

PREFACE

It is with great diffidence, and in response to many requests, that I offer these reminiscences of my psychic and other experiences to the public.

In view of the exceptional nature of my life, I have decided, after careful consideration, to tell my story, not in the chronological order usual in a book of memoirs, but in the form of a *pot pourri* of events and incidents, chosen from a mass of material to illustrate all the various types of men and women with whom my career as a clairvoyante has brought me into contact.

All sorts and conditions of men and women, therefore, from the highest to the humblest, and from every part of the world, have a place in the pages which follow. But no confidence has been violated and, where necessary, I have suppressed names and such other details as might lead to the identification of my subjects.

I have written these reminiscences, simply, from my heart, feeling that I was narrating them—to friends.

NELL ST. JOHN MONTAGUE.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

"BABY—Memsahib, don't cry——! Baby—Memsahib, see more lovely pictures . . . pictures which move—not like the ones the puppy tore——"

Even to-day I seem to hear the echo of my ayah's soft, sing-song voice as, raising my tear-stained face from a sorrowful contemplation of the relics of "The House that Jack built," with the pages of which my father's bull-pup had tried to impair his amazingly comprehensive digestion, I stared at the crystal which she held to me.

As far back as I can remember I was familiar with that shining ball in which such strange pictures would form and fade. And whenever I looked into mirrors, or still waters, strange visions would appear, only to fade, in quick succession; but I cannot recall a time when the sight of these living pictures surprised or frightened me. From the time that I could toddle they seemed a natural part of my life. To this day I can see myself squatting contentedly, my pet monkey "Raj" beside me, beneath the punkahs on the verandah of the Residency in India, where my father, the late Major-General C. B. Lucie-Smith, was stationed, staring happily into the crystal ball which my ayah had given me, while all around me were strewn the gaily coloured picture-books sent from England, discarded for the ball which never failed to show me pictures just as gaily coloured, which had the advantage of being alive.

When I was only a baby of three years, my ayah, a clever Hindu, assured my parents that I had the gift of second sight. My father pooh-poohed the information as native superstition, but my mother was inclined to believe it. She herself, a Scots woman, was endowed with psychic power, inherited, though in a modified degree, from her own mother, a Highland woman, who possessed undoubted second sight.

My father's passive English contempt for what he termed native superstition, and my mother's half-sympathetic toleration, left my ayah a free hand to cultivate what she believed to be my psychic gifts, and never a day passed but, before a mirror, or beside some still nullah,* I would look for new pictures, which would flash and vanish before my eyes in the same manner as those in my crystal ball.

One day, when I was about five, I got proof that my ayah's belief in my gift was well founded.

My favourite dolly, a tattered Highlander, cuddled in my arms, my monkey perched beside me, I was sitting in a corner of the verandah gazing intently into my crystal. No one was near, except the punkah wallahs; my mother was resting in the dressing-room preparatory to taking her bath before dinner, and my ayah was in the nursery preparing my little mosquito-curtained cot, as it was nearing my bedtime.

The crystal appeared to sway and move and lose all shape, as is usual before a vision. In its place came a thick black mist which seemed to spread, enveloping all the space before me. Then slowly in the blackness I saw reflected the interior of my mother's bedroom, and my eyes became focused upon the blue embroidered

* *Nullah*—a lake.

dressing-gown laid on the bed ready for her to put on, when she should go to her bath. My mother was approaching the bed, her hands outstretched to pick the garment up, when, almost paralysed with horror, I saw something uncoil itself from amongst the soft silk folds. A wild shriek broke from me, and I dropped the ball, as the concealed cobra darted out and reared to strike.

In a moment both my mother and nurse rushed to me. Sobbing wildly, I told them that a cobra was hiding to kill my mother; and it was in vain they tried to pacify me—I only clung to my mother and cried the more.

At last, in order to soothe me, she called the native sentry who was on guard near us, and told him to come with us to show the Baby Memsahib there was no cobra. With me clinging to her skirts, and my ayah, wide-eyed and terrified, hurrying beside us, she followed the man into her room, where, pointing to the bed, she told me to look—there was no snake there. Then to show the truth of her words she approached the bed. As she did so, a loud cry broke from the sentry's lips, and with wonderful courage he pushed her aside and sprang forward, his bayonet uplifted to strike the cobra which had suddenly darted out, and reared up with inflated hood.

To this day I can vividly recall the scene. . . . The tall turbaned man, lunging desperately at the snake, while I stood too petrified to move, conscious that my mother's arms were tightly round me, her face pale as the creamy dress she wore.

A moment later, we were surrounded by soldiers and servants attracted by the shouts of the sentry, who turned to salute as my father, also attracted by the noise, entered the room.

"Charlie," I can hear my mother saying, her voice broken with emotion, as she pushed me to him, "I owe her my life!"

After that, even my father refrained from teasing me about my imaginary pictures, and the story soon spread from station to station, until my parents had to decline endless requests from white and native inhabitants alike that I might be allowed to look into the crystal to help them with their lives. To such requests my father was adamant in his refusal. I was far too young, he declared, to be allowed to use my second sight in such a way; he dreaded the consequences to my health. So I never tried to look for others, content in the knowledge that now even my beloved daddy regarded my treasured "vision-ball," as he called it, more favourably.

A few weeks after the cobra incident my mother gave a tennis party, which my father promised to attend after he had finished an inspection. I had been given my crystal to keep me quiet, while the guests were taking refreshments on the verandah and in the drawing-room.

Presently I burst out crying, and when my ayah, anxious to quieten me before the guests, ran to me, I told her that I had seen my Daddy being killed by a man with a long knife. I described, sobbing, how the blood was running out of his shoulder, and how he was lying dead upon the ground.

Terribly distressed by what I said, but anxious to appear unbelieving, my mother ordered the ayah to take me to my nursery. Just as she, carrying me in her arms, reached the door, my father's A.D.C. brushed past us, and, calling my mother aside, broke the news. My father was being brought home on a stretcher, badly wounded. While he was inspecting the gaol, a prisoner

had suddenly flung himself on him, stabbed him with a knife which he had secreted in his loin-cloth, and would have killed him but for the quickness of another prisoner who had sprung forward and knocked up the murderer's knife, so that it only ripped my father's shoulder instead of piercing his lungs.

This gruesome act had been vividly depicted in the crystal, and went far to convince all present that my visions were not, as many had supposed, the imaginations of a childish brain or the hallucinations of fever. Europeans and natives alike henceforth looked upon me as uncanny.

It was after this event that a certain important official came to stay at the Residency. He was to have brought his wife, but at the last moment wired to tell my parents that as she was ill he was coming alone.

The night of his arrival a large dinner party was given in his honour, and, as usual, I was brought in to dessert before going to bed.

The big man took me on his knee, and asked, "Isn't this the little crystal gazer?" And as I answered in the affirmative, he said, "Now, just look in your crystal for me, and tell me if you see any cobra going to gobble me up." He spoke laughingly, but I saw my father did not approve. He said nothing, however, for our guest was a very important personage, and it would not have been etiquette to gainsay him.

"Fetch the Baby Mem sahib's crystal," my father ordered curtly.

A bearer brought me my precious ball, and a tense silence fell on the guests as, quite oblivious of their gaze, I peered into its depths. I was still sitting on my new friend's knee.

Suddenly I laughed. The crystal had given me good news. "Your wife is not ill any more," I said, for I

had recognized the beautiful lady I saw reflected in the translucent depths. "She is up, dancing in her room with a man with grey hair——"

I paused, frowning, for the grey-haired man's face seemed familiar to me. "She is wearing such a pretty kimono with butterflies. . . . The man looks like Colonel M——." I mentioned the name of an officer commanding a regiment of native cavalry stationed some miles distant. "He is kissing her—he is kissing her on the neck——." I stopped short, startled by my mother's voice. I had never heard her speak so sharply before.

Springing towards me, she almost snatched the crystal from my hands, and as I looked from her flushed, confused face, to that of the man on whose knee I sat, I was puzzled by his grim expression.

"Nell talks a lot of nonsense, General," my mother said hurriedly, and I heard her voice shake nervously. "You must not listen to her rubbish."

Hurt at the accusation, my lips trembled and the tears forced themselves into my eyes. To be so snubbed before a whole crowd of guests when I had simply told what my crystal revealed, was more than I could bear.

Quickly the big man stooped and patted my head. "Thank you, little Nell," he said, but when he kissed me I felt his lips were trembling. "

A few moments later I was in my nursery, listening to my mother's ayah confiding to the maid that the great Sahib was not, after all, sleeping in the principal best room. He had ordered his carriage and was leaving at once. In some vague way, I connected his departure with my disclosure, although to my childish mind the sight of his wife in the arms of the Colonel did not appear a reason for it.

Years afterwards, I learned how, as a consequence of that crystal vision, there had ensued one of the most famous divorce cases of the time. Returning unexpectedly, after having left his house supposedly for several days, a certain important official had found his wife, whom he had left apparently too ill to accompany him, in the embrace of a man who was commanding a cavalry regiment in the district. During the proceedings which followed no mention was made of how the outraged husband first had his suspicion aroused ; but some years afterwards I received a tiny round crystal pendant set in brilliants, as a small memento from the man whose existence I had almost forgotten. He was on the eve of marrying again, and wanted me to foretell in my own crystal ball, the fortunes of his second venture.

Very soon after the occasion on which, in my innocence, I had made so embarrassing a use of my gift, my parents determined that I must be sent for a time to England, although, unlike most English children, I flourished and thrived in India.

As I drove out in my little carriage, with the outrider on horseback behind, my ayah, sitting beside me, would talk to me of this far-off country, where all the people were white and where I could no longer ride on "Pathan," my father's state elephant, or listen at night to the weird cries from the distant jungle. And she would gather me in her arms and implore me to treasure the great gift which Allah had given me, the gift of second sight. Other people would try to take it from me and would mock at it to make me ashamed, but she urged me to treasure it and practise it, no matter who tried to interfere. Awed by her manner, I promised.

Once, when we were driving near the outskirts of the

jungle, we left the bullocks to rest beneath the trees, with the soldier on guard beside the driver, while we roamed a little way on foot. As I filled my hands with crimson and purple orchids, I heard the sound of a woman moaning. Turning, frightened, to the spot from which it came, I saw a huddled figure lying face downwards amongst the grass, near a small dirty *nullah*. Running from my nurse, I stared at the prostrate woman, asking her in Hindustani what was wrong. The poor creature, a peasant, raised her face, which was distorted and disfigured with grief.

She told us wildly that her son had disappeared and that she feared that the jackals or wolves had taken him. For a moment my nurse remained silent, frowning, as if weighing a problem in her mind. Then she took my hand.

"Baby Memsahib," she said to the grief-stricken woman, with a note of pride in her voice, "will tell you all you want to know—whether your son is dead or alive." Then she drew me closer to the water, and, nothing loth, I leant forward to stare into the dark dirty depths.

Slowly, distinctly, figures took shape. I saw an old bearded fakir, with one arm, grown rigid after years of agony, raised above his head in everlasting penance to Heaven, squatting beside a cave outside which was chained a blue-faced monkey. Lying near him, a dirty, blood-stained rag about his head, I saw an Indian boy of about fifteen. As I described the scene the woman gave a shrill scream of joy.

"It is the dwelling of Ostheli, the Holy Beggar," she cried. "He has saved my boy!" Without another word, she darted away, her arms outstretched, her eyes shining with hope, in the direction of a distant village. And there, as my ayah afterwards learned,

she found her son, who, straying in the jungle and frightened of wolves, had climbed up a tree, from which he had fallen and injured his head. Bleeding and unconscious, he had been found by the holy man who had taken him to his cave, which the woman had recognized from the crystal vision, and beside which was chained the fakir's companion, a blue-faced monkey.

During the days which preceded our voyage to England, I was torn between hilarious excitement at the idea of seeing in the flesh my sister and grandmother who sent me the much-loved brown paper parcels full of toys and books, and sorrow at leaving Alaci, the white-bearded butler whose salaams made me conscious of my importance and dignity, and the favourite sentry who always fed my tame *minah*.* It was not until I clung to the tall soldier-man who kissed me a last good-bye that I realized the full poignant sorrow of parting from my father. Not all the sisters and grandmothers in the world, I thought, could make up to me for leaving behind me this hero, whose glittering medals symbolized to me all imaginable glory. But in the moment of my grief, my ayah came to me with outstretched arms. "Baby Memsahib," she whispered, "you will see the Sahib in your crystal. He will come to you in it every day."

Letting my father unclasp my clinging hands, I took the crystal she held to me. In the midst of my grief, I felt immediate consolation in the knowledge that I should see my father, as he stood there in the flesh, reflected in my ball. A sudden pity came over me as I looked at my beautiful fair-haired mother. She would

* *Minah*—a black Indian bird, which in captivity learns to speak as well as any parrot.

have to rely on lifeless photographs of Daddy, while I would see him move and smile.

Clasping my crystal in my hot sticky hands, like a drowning man clinging to a lifeline, I stood watching until the last outline of land had grown faint. Then it was, I remember, that I first felt a half-awed realization that I possessed something precious which even my mother and ayah were without, and in a dim childish way I knew that even partings would not matter because in the depths of my crystal those I loved would come to me. I seemed to understand vaguely, wonderingly, the limitless power of the gift I had, the gift which my ayah told me was Second Sight.

From that moment on the deck of the P. & O. liner, my attitude to my crystal and all it stood for underwent a change. It was no longer just my most cherished plaything. It was the mysterious channel by which I could keep in touch with a loved being out of sight, and dispelled in my mind all conception of the finality of distance and space.

The realization of the wonder of my gift, however, did not tend to age me beyond my years. Of all tomboys on board I had the reputation of being the wildest and most lighthearted, and I became known to my ship-mates as the "Little Red Demon," in combined allusion to a red riding-hood cloak which I wore when the nights were cold, and to what the Captain described as my "over-developed bump of mischief."

CHAPTER II

THE UPRaised KNIFE

THE days on board, though they lengthened into weeks, sped quickly, and, except for a round of romps with children of my own age, passed without incident, until one day something happened which thrilled the whole ship.

There was to be a concert, and a tall distinguished-looking foreigner was the organizing spirit. He had been a leading tenor in an operatic company years before, but, having married an immensely rich American old enough to be his mother, had retired from the stage, and was returning with his wife from a visit to India.

The unhappy marital relations of the couple were the common talk of the ship, and the gossip amongst the ayahs was that the man had been seen to strike his wife when, goaded by his insults, she had roundly told him she would not give him another penny of her fortune. This gossip and scandal made no impression on me. I was far too engrossed in romping with playmates to pay much attention to the talk of the grown-ups. Nevertheless, I felt a sensation of resentment and dislike when, running along the deck, I came upon my mother talking to the man.

He was urging her to sing at the concert, and I heard her consent. Then, as he lingered beside her, he turned and saw me.

"Ah," he exclaimed in his broken English, "so this is the little crystal-gazing witch. If you, madame,

will permit it, I would ask her to read the crystal for me, now?"

My mother hesitated, and I moved away. I instinctively hated this man with the cold black eyes, who, according to the ayah, had hit his wife, the old lady with white hair.

"Don't run away, little one," he exclaimed. "I will give you lots of chocolates to look into the crystal for me."

In spite of this bribe I pouted and refused, but my mother caught my hands.

"Be a good girl," she said, "and do as the Señor asks you." Then, leading me away to our state-room, she told the ayah to bring me my crystal. A moment later, I was seated beside the Spaniard and peering unwillingly into it.

Backwards and forwards the ball seemed to sway, and a thick mist to envelop it. Slowly, deliberately, the blackness divided, and forms and figures appeared. Looking closer, I saw my mother's face, white and frightened, staring out at me. This faded, and I realized that I was looking at two figures, those of my mother and the man beside me. They were standing in a dark corner, and my mother wore a dress which shimmered white against the darkness. She did not appear frightened but was looking away from the man, who was creeping towards her. I felt I hated him as I watched his thin lean fingers clutching at her, as if he would tear her gown. The next moment I caught my breath, for the man had sprung on my mother and I saw his hands fasten round her throat. He seemed to tear something from her—something which sparkled green and a myriad of colours in his grasp. Horrified, I drew back.

"What do you see, little one?" the foreigner asked, smiling, as tongue-tied, I looked at my mother, wondering whether I should warn her at once of her danger.

Once again the Spaniard pointed to the crystal ball, and conscious of a growing fear, I peered once more into its depths.

A cry broke from me. It was red—just a red blurred mist which swam dizzily before me. Only once before had I seen it turn thus into a crimson fog. That was on the night of the attempt on my father's life in the gaol. I rushed to my mother.

"Come away," I cried. "He is going to hurt you. I saw him hurting you. . . ." I could say no more: my mother had placed her hand over my mouth.

I shall never forget the look of anger the man darted at me, as, with a forced smile, he rose, and, assuring my mother that he was too used to children's fancies to resent what I had said, left the state-room.

I knew that my mother was annoyed, for, although she did not scold me, she called my ayah and told her to put the crystal away as it was beginning to get on my nerves and make me imaginative. Then, turning away, she left me in unspoken disgrace.

Uninterrupted by my vision, the arrangements for the concert progressed, and, as she not only had a trained voice but was generally regarded as the most beautiful woman on board, my mother was looked upon as the star of the entertainment. As it was to be late at night, however, I was not allowed to sit up for it. I went to bed in a state of unhappiness and foreboding, from which not even my ayah's jungle stories could rouse me. At the bottom of my heart I think a dim feeling of resentment against my mother rankled. She had so deter-

minedly ignored my warning. She had seemed almost to blame me for what I had seen.

It was a terribly hot night, and, overcome with the heat and tired with play, I fell into a deep sleep. When I awoke, I realized that my ayah and I were no longer alone. The cabin was full of men in uniform and women who talked in shrill tones. In the middle of a group stood my mother. She was very white, and I saw that she had been crying.

"It was my husband's wedding present——" I heard her say, as I wriggled from the bunk to stand beside her.

Later, I heard the whole story. The concert over, my mother, who was hot and tired, had gone on deck alone, to get some fresh air. She was wearing a white shimmering gown and had round her neck a diamond and emerald snake. The emeralds were priceless gems which had been given to my father years before by a powerful and rich maharajah, in token of gratitude for some service he had done him. My father had had the gems reset as a wedding gift to his wife.

It was a dark night with only a faint glimmering moonlight, and my mother leant for a little in the shadow of some boats, gazing seawards. Suddenly she became conscious that someone had caught her from behind and, before she could scream, her mouth was gagged by a strong hand while she felt fingers tearing the jewels from her neck. She fought and struggled, but her assailant gripped her by the throat, half strangling her. A moment later as, half unconscious, she reeled back, she saw a tall familiar figure fleeing across the deck. But though she recognized the thief and knew that the prophecy of the crystal had been fulfilled, she had not seen his face, and could not have made a sworn accusation

against the Spaniard, who, the moment the news of her loss became known, was foremost amongst the passengers in solicitous sympathy.

The Captain warned my mother not to speak of her suspicion until she could substantiate it, but promised to leave no stone unturned to recover her jewels, although he felt the hopelessness of his task.

One night, however, came a *dénouement* of the drama which transfixed the ship with horror. The quarrels between the Spaniard and his elderly wife had increased in violence until they had reached a tragic climax, and those sleeping in the vicinity of their cabin were aroused by the sound of furious altercation followed by a woman's piercing screams.

Immediately afterwards the stillness of the night was further broken by the echo of a revolver shot.

Men and women sprang from their bunks and rushed to the Spaniard's state-room.

On forcing the door, they found him shot through the brain, while beside him, rigid with horror, stood his wife. She told the Captain that, waking to hear someone in the room, and turning on the light, she had seen her husband, revolver in hand, before her jewel case. Before he could stop her she had rung the bell violently for help. Thereupon he had sprung towards her, pointing the revolver at her. Whether he had meant to murder her or not she did not know. The hurried knocking of a steward on the door startled him. Seeing that the game was up, he turned the revolver on himself and fell bleeding at her feet. After a search of his cabin, there was revealed amongst many other ill-gotten treasures, my mother's emerald snake.

Up to his eyes in gambling debts, rendered desperate

by the knowledge that he had pledged his wife's credit to the point of ruination, he had planned the last *coup* of robbing her and making good his escape on the following day, when the ship reached port, with her jewels and those of my mother.

Shortly after this, my crystal-gazing was for a time interrupted. One day, while I peered into my ball in a sheltered nook on deck, a strange, blurred mist effaced all vision. Frightened by the unexpected blankness, which seemed to confuse my brain, I became conscious of pains in my limbs and an unfamiliar sense of illness. That night I was delirious in the throes of fever, and a week later was pronounced too ill to continue the voyage to England. I was landed with my mother, her maid and my ayah, at Malta, where for weeks I lay between life and death. The first request I made when I was reported out of danger was that I might once more have my beloved crystal to see my daddy in its depths.

At first the doctors shook their heads, but eventually, fearing lest my fretting should produce a relapse, they gave me the ball, which seemed to me my one link with my father and the dear country I had left. Throughout my convalescence I lay with it near me, whiling away the time by watching the pictures which would form and pass. Nothing of importance was shadowed in their depths, however, until the night before we started again for England. I then saw the vision of a tiny child at the edge of the sea, holding out her wee arms towards a fair-haired woman, who floated far out on the waves.

Instinctively I knew that I was looking at the little sister to whom I was going, and to my distress I saw that she was crying, and apparently calling to the woman. Suddenly, as I watched the scene, the woman's hands

went up, as if she were signalling for help . . . That vision faded, and I next saw the baby crying bitterly, while near her stood a crowd of people beside the figure of a fair-haired woman, who did not move

As I had never seen people bathing in the sea, I did not understand what had happened, but I knew that it was something terrible

Nevertheless, the vision, which I described to my ayah, faded from my mind until our arrival at my grandmother's house in Edinburgh, some weeks later. My grandmother took me in her arms, but I disengaged myself from them to run to a little fair-haired tot who was gravely eyeing me. While we were making friends, my grandmother drew my mother aside and told her that just before we landed a terrible tragedy had happened, Muriel's nurse, a devoted Scots girl, had been drowned when bathing with her at Prestonpans.

Leaving my little sister, I made my way to my grandmother's side. "She had fair hair," I said gravely. "I saw her in the crystal—dead."

Then as my grannie stared at me in bewilderment, my ayah came forward and spoke quietly in her ear.

My grandmother started, looked at me, and shook her head.

"It is a dangerous gift," she exclaimed, in a shocked voice. "She must be made to forget, even as I try to forget."

Into my ayah's eyes I saw a look of stubborn disapproval creep, and that night as she tucked me into bed, she knelt beside me. "Promise, Baby Mem-sahib," she whispered, and her voice was low and vibrated with passionate entreaty, "promise you will never let these Mem-sahibs take away the crystal or make

you forget your second sight. Always look, Baby Memsahib, in mirrors and waters and the ball. Allah has given you vision. See always, my best beloved white treasure."

Awed by her solemnity, I promised.

No grandmother in the world, I determined, should steal from me my constant friend.

Over the years which followed I will pass rapidly. They were spent partly in Scotland with my grandmother, partly in India with my parents ; and presently I was sent to a convent in Brittany to finish my education. The community looked upon my second sight as dangerous superstition, and forbade me to use the ball which had been my companion since I could speak or walk. The Reverend Mother wanted to confiscate it, but the scene I made deterred her. So I kept my treasure, but kept it out of sight ; and only when all the convent slept would I creep out of bed and fetch it, happy in the knowledge that in my hours of loneliness and exile visions of those I loved would come to cheer me and pictures flash and fade to brighten, even if I did not understand their meaning, the monotony of my daily life.

When the term was over and all the French girls had gone home for the holidays, I, the only English girl in the school, was left alone to wander aimlessly about the cloisters or to read in the garden which overlooked the town and river. For my grandmother was dead, and my sister, who was staying with an aunt, had some infectious infantile complaint, so that I was destined to pass the holidays exiled in France.

My loneliness was mitigated, however, by the fact that the deserted dormitories of the convent were filled with *retraitantes*. From all over the country women

of all classes had come to "make their souls." Later, a similar Retreat for men was to be preached by a Jesuit.

One day, as I sat beneath a tree, I heard someone call my name and looking up saw the Marquise de la L——, an old white-haired lady, who lived during the summer in the Guest House situated in the middle of the convent grounds. It was a modern building, in a different style from the other part of the convent, and was devoted to the reception of lady guests. These were mostly poor noblewomen who eked out their modest incomes as *dames pensionnaires* and spent the greater part of their lives there; but the Marquise de la L—— was an exception. She was a rich widow, owning a handsome house in Paris. Bordering, however, on old age and senile decay, she delighted in spending part of her time in the frugal quiet of the Guest House.

I sprang up and went to her, and she laid her hand on my arm. "You are alone, *petite*," she said gently. Then she glanced behind her to see that no one was within earshot.

"I hear you can look in a crystal and see visions. I am interested. I want you to bring your crystal to my room and look in it for me."

I hesitated, knowing the trouble there would be if the Superior found out; but the Marquise divining the reason of my silence, patted my shoulder imperatively. "No one will know, *petite*," she urged. "*Les Sœurs* are at their devotions. I shall be alone in my *salon*."

I hurried to my tiny room, and taking my crystal from its hiding place, made my way to the Guest House. A few minutes later, seated in a corner of the plain airy room, I gave the crystal into the Marquise's hands, telling her to hold it for a few seconds. Then, asking her to place it on the table, I leant forward and peered into it.

Spellbound, for the swaying and moving of the ball as it foretold the coming of a vision, never failed to thrill me, I stared steadily into its depths. What I saw made me start and catch my breath. The old lady was lying in bed. The room seemed to be in darkness, lit only by a stream of moonlight which filtered through the window. Slowly the door opened, and two men crept towards the sleeping Marquise. One was tall and largely built, and I noticed a hideous scar twisting above his mouth, while his companion was low of stature and strangely emaciated. Shuddering, I watched the bigger man spring at the Marquise, and saw the glint of steel in his upraised hand. The next moment the vision faded, and I shut my eyes as the crystal seemed stained with crimson drops.

"What have you seen?" the Marquise eagerly questioned me. I did not answer. I felt I could not tell her that she would be injured—perhaps even done to death. Sick with apprehension, I stood up, but she caught my arm. "You must have seen something terrible," she said. "Your face is like chalk. I insist that you tell me, no matter what it is."

I tried to explain, in disjointed phrases, that I had seen a warning that two men would try to injure her in her room. She shook her head. "That is impossible here," she said. "No men enter here." Then she dismissed the subject and talked of other things, until I told myself she was right.

No men entered that Guest House. There were no men on the premises except the gardener, René the cowman, and Monsieur l'Aumônier. The Retreat for sailors would not begin until the women *retraitantes* had gone, and Madame la Marquise had returned to Paris.

The matter more or less faded from my mind, until one afternoon when I was standing beside the chapel gate watching the procession of a hundred *retraitantes* as they filed slowly up the path carrying banners and chanting a processional hymn. They were a motley gathering, women with the winglike coiffes of Guingamp, Brest, and St. Brieux ; some wore shoes, others *sabots*, but all were in holiday attire, for it was the last day of the Retreat and the Bishop was to give the final Benediction. As they passed me I looked at them curiously, noticing here a red-cheeked peasant girl, whose glossy hair was combed tightly over her ears beneath her snowy *coiffe*, there a wrinkled old *grandmère*, whose crooked fingers grasped her rosary beads. Suddenly I started and caught at the pillar for support. Close beside me, I saw two faces which had been imprinted upon my brain. Right before my eyes they passed—those two I had seen in the crystal when I had looked into it for Madame la Marquise. But these were not men. They wore the shawls and *coiffes* of Breton peasant women.

I stared in amazement from the thin, pallid face of one to the ugly scar which twisted her companion's mouth, the scar I had noticed on the face of the man who had attacked the Marquise with an open knife. Stifling a cry, I cowered back as they passed within the chapel door.

All that evening, I wondered what I could do. At last, urged by a sense of duty, I took my courage in both hands and asked to see the Superior. She came to me in her parlour, but the pleasantness faded from her eyes when I told her I had come to warn her. She scolded me for my disobedience in having read my crystal for an inmate of the Convent, and sent me away in dire disgrace.

Determined not to let her disbelief cost the old Marquise her life, I made my way to the cowsheds which stood at the far end of the grounds. René Combault, the general factotum of the convent, an athletic man of twenty-five, I knew would listen to me, and I made up my mind to confide my story to him. He was a good-looking young man, the son, according to the whispers of scandal, of a nobleman and a peasant girl. The nuns had taken him from a foundling home years before, to train for their small farm.

"Don't be afraid, Meese," he said. "I will keep watch outside the door of Madame la Marquise to-night. Old Jacques will also be with me."

So I went to bed happy in the knowledge that if indeed my crystal had foretold the truth, the old Marquise would not be at the mercy of the women I had seen. That they were men masquerading in female clothes never entered my head, although I was perplexed and puzzled.

That night, the hushed silence of the cloisters was broken by the unfamiliar sounds of men's voices, shouting wildly, loudly, while above them rang the screams of a woman. Dashing from my little room, I sped across the garden to the Guest House, and up the polished stairs to the Marquise's room.

On the floor, bound hand and foot and writhing in impotent fury, was a huge figure, clad in a woman's thick skirt and shawl. From the head, however, the white *coiffe* had fallen, disclosing a man's hair, cropped *à la brosse*. Near him, wearing a peasant woman's apron and thick embroidered shawl, was his companion, who, unable to move, as his hands and feet were bound with ropes which René had brought with him from the

cowshed, was cursing loudly. Close by, where it had fallen, lay a huge carving knife. Staring down at the men stood René, with a three-pronged pike in his hand and old Jacques with a blunderbuss which was used to frighten the gulls from the lawn. The Marquise lay moaning on the bed, her face covered in her hands.

"She's not hurt, Meese," René said breathlessly. "We got after them in time." He lowered his voice and whispered in my ear.

I muttered a breathless assent and ran to Monsieur l'Aumônier's garden to get him to summon the Gendarmes.

A few moments later I followed the panting and horrified chaplain back to the Guest House, where we now found a crowd of terrified whispering nuns, who held the sobbing Marquise in their arms.

The loud clanging of the bell announced the arrival of the Gendarmes, and the two men, making an incongruous picture with their women's clothes and short cropped heads, were led away. Having ascertained that the Marquise carried her jewels and a good deal of money with her, they had followed her from Paris to the convent, and in order to carry out their contemplated robbery had joined the retreat in female guise.

A strange and terrifying incident, connected with the crystal and yet not dependent upon it for its dramatic *dénouement*, is always connected in my mind with the memory of the carving knife, which at the trial of the two mock *retraitantes* proved their murderous intent.

The kind-hearted, big-souled chaplain, with whom I had struck up a warm friendship, having argued on my behalf that, being English, I should be allowed out alone, the Superior had rather unwillingly given me the

coveted permission, and one glorious afternoon I strolled along the quay to see the boats.

As I stood gazing with wistful eyes at a potato steamer flying the Union Jack, which had arrived from Guernsey with a cargo, I heard a shout near by, and saw men peering wildly over the side of the quay. The tide was out, and at the bottom of the huge wall a man lay, face downwards and motionless. A sailor had slipped over the top and crashed headlong down.

"*Le malheureux, il est mort,*" a woman screamed. Horror-stricken I watched men carrying the injured man away to the *hôtel Dieu*, which was situated beyond the convent, at the top of the little town.

Later that evening, as I sat alone in the refectory, the Superior herself came to me. "*Mon enfant,*" she said hurriedly, "a tragedy has occurred. An English sailor has fallen over the quay. He is dying, and no one understands a word of English. In case he makes a last request, the Reverend Mother there has sent to pray me to let you go to interpret the wishes of *ce malheureux.*"

In great excitement I assured her I would go. The fact that the man was English touched my heart, and even a tragedy broke the deadly monotony of those convent walls. Snatching up my hat, I sped away, deaf to the parting injunction flung after me respecting decorous conduct, and I was out of breath when I reached the white-washed building of the *hôtel Dieu*.

In one of the wards I found the injured man who lay blood-stained upon the pillow, a gaping wound in his head. His eyes were closed, and he made a strange rattling sound when he breathed. So horrified was I that for a moment I contemplated flight. The white-

robed nun beside me divined my impulse. She took my hand firmly in hers.

"Don't leave, *chérie*," she said. "He may want you before he dies."

Choking back my fears, I stood my ground, but it was my first sight of blood and the gruesome spectacle of that man lying there, the candles of death lighted round him, almost made a coward of me. But I conquered my repulsion and, while the sisters in white recited aloud the prayers for the dying, I drew nearer the bed, and timidly took one of the man's hard, stained hands.

For days he remained unconscious, and I stayed on, so that if he regained consciousness before death came he could entrust a last message to one who understood. But, although the doctor, a dirty old man who took snuff beside, and even over the patients' beds, declared the man must die, he lived, and because I alone could make him understand what he was told, I was allowed, during the day, practically to take up my quarters at the *hôtel Dieu*.

Little by little, Bob Lallott recovered. He was just an ordinary common type of sailor. But because he was of my own country, and a native of Cardiff, I revelled in the joy of being near to tend him.

One day, lying back amongst his pillows, he asked me if I would look in the crystal for him and tell him when he would see his wife and kiddy again. I promised I would, and that afternoon would be a good opportunity.

There was to be a celebration of the Fête Dieu, and a great procession was to tour the hospital grounds, headed by an Archbishop and several Bishops, and swelled by all the inmates of the hospital who could walk, as well as the townfolk. Every one of the inmates of the ward in

which Bob lay was to go, except two bedridden old men, and I told the warder I would remain with the injured Englishman so that he could attend the procession. But I asked him to be sure to take with him Ivor Liatoff, the man who occupied the bed next to Bob's, as he had been terrified me. He was a French Jew, who had been brought to the hospital as a mental case after having tried to kill his wife. He spent his time watching me from behind the closed curtains of his bed whenever I was in the ward, and although the nurse declared he was pious, his wicked crafty eyes filled me with horror.

Assuring me that Ivor was to attend the procession, the ward attendant departed, full of gratitude.

For some time I read aloud to Bob from *Tit Bits* and *Answers*, and then, as we heard the distant singing of the procession, he asked me, "What about the crystal?"

I took it from the bag at my side and, I looked into it; and then, placing it on the bed, I made him hold it; and then, placing it on the bed, I looked into it. Bob said, his eyes "Tell me if you see the missus," and I was thinking of her eagerly fixed upon the ball. "I am thinking of her hard."

I did not answer. Slowly, surely, the ball appeared to move, but what I saw in the darkness was not the face of the woman about whom the sick man was thinking; but an evil face, with black, narrow eyes which seemed to burn into my own.

Nearer, nearer, Ivor Liatoff came until, in spite of myself, I drew back, an exclamation on my lips. I had seen the glint of steel in his clenched up raised hand.

"What is it, Miss Nell?"

Before I could even answer, there came the sound of a falling latch and a shadow fell across the bed, darkening the face in the crystal.

"God, Miss! O God!" The cry fell from the man beside me, and like a man paralysed with horror, Bob stared towards the door.

"Save yourself, Miss. Don't mind me."

His voice was hoarse with frenzied entreaty as, tightly bandaged, powerless to move, he lay gazing at the man who, his lips parted in an evil smile, crept noiselessly across the ward. His eyes narrowing, even as I had seen them in the ball, Ivor came. . . . The next moment a cry broke from the sailor's throat, and the crouching figure sprang towards me. . . . I felt his fingers clutch my throat. With a grip of steel he bent my head back, back, his eyes glaring into mine. I saw above my head the glint of a knife, and a choking cry broke from me.

In a flash I realized my helplessness, while in a detached way I heard the chanting of the procession below.

"The devil said kill——" Low the rasping voice sounded, and I felt on my face the man's fetid breath. "The devil said to me—kill—her——"

Dully, stupidly, the words echoed through a strange buzzing in my ears, which almost drowned the chanting of the choir. Far, far away, I seemed to hear a shout. It was as if someone had cried my name aloud.

Then the hold tightened about my throat, and I knew no more until I opened my eyes in wonder, to see a man wearing a golden mitre, who was bending over me.

Conscious of a throbbing pain in my throat, I put up my hand, and, as I did so, a woman pushed her way through the crowd and caught me in her arms. I felt the tears of the Mère Assistante fall on my face. "*Ma pauvre petite!*" she sobbed. "I thought you were dead.

Still wondering what it was all about, I raised my head. A carving knife lay on the floor at my feet.

The warder, trembling from the shock which he had received, explained what had happened. He had missed Ivor from the procession, and, remembering his promise to me, had returned as fast as he could to the ward in case the patient should have gone back. As he mounted the stairs he saw the man he sought creep out of the door leading to the refectory where the banquet for the Archbishop and Bishops was laid, claspings in his hand a huge carving knife. Guessing at once what was in the Jew's mind, he rushed after him. He was just in time to catch his uplifted arm as he held the knife to my throat.

From being just "*la meese anglaise*" who was learning to *soigner les malades* during my holidays, I now found myself quite a heroine. Even the mayor came in his chain and white kid gloves, to present me with a huge basket of strawberries and make profuse and gesticulating apologies for the *bêtise* of the authorities in sending a criminal maniac into a ward with helpless men.

But it was months, even years, before I quite got over the horror of feeling the grip of that lunatic's fingers, and long afterwards I would wake up screaming that he was cutting my throat.

Apart from the joy of having one of my beloved countrymen, I later blessed the training which the Mère Assistante had given me in the art of bandaging and first aid. In the sad years of 1914 and after, her teaching came back like "bread cast upon the waters," and stood me and others in good stead.

CHAPTER III

LOVE, UNE DOT AND SHELLFISH

My life within cloistered precincts was varied by romance as well as threatened tragedy, and in this also my crystal visions played a part.

By the time I was sixteen I had attained my full height of five feet seven, and, much to my satisfaction, was often mistaken for two or three years older than I really was. To this error was partly due an affair which very much enlivened the uneventful days of my existence.

One of the *dames pensionnaires* in the Guest House of the Convent, an elderly spinster, was related to the widowed Comtesse de la M——, who, with her son, lived in a rather dilapidated but picturesque *château* outside the little town.

One day, Mademoiselle de la L—— had entrusted me with a commission on the quay, to purchase a large basket of oysters, which were being sold at a wonderfully low price. When I had accomplished my errand, I returned to the Guest House, and, with the basket swinging on my arm, ran up the stairs. Hurrying round a corner of the corridor, I cannoned violently into a man. This was in itself a most unexpected occurrence in that house, and when, hot and embarrassed, I had extricated myself and my fishy basket from his arms, I saw that it was not only a man but a young and astonishingly good-looking one, dressed in a fashion which savoured rather of the Paris Boulevards than of a

secluded town in Brittany. For a moment he stood staring at me. Then, with a grace that would have done credit to a courtier of the Court of Louis XV, he stooped and picked up the oysters which our collision had scattered along the passage.

It is amazing how much can be said and done in a short time. Before the last oyster had been retrieved, I had discovered that this astonishing good-looking man was le Comte de la M—— himself, who had just come from visiting the lady to whom I was taking the shellfish, and in return, he had found out my name, my parentage, and that I was alone at the convent for the holidays.

A few more discreet questions elicited from me that my father was a general in India ; also that I loved tennis, but had no one to play with. In a few minutes it was arranged that the Comte would ask his mother to call on me and invite me to the *château* ; and my vanity was much gratified when he exclaimed, " You have finished your education, Mademoiselle ? You are here only to learn French ? "

I made haste to assure him that his supposition was right, and determined to let down all the tucks in my dresses to reinforce his illusion as to my age and standing.

How long the Comte and I remained in that corridor I do not know, but when at length the sound of footsteps interrupted our *tête-à-tête*, I continued my journey with flushed cheeks and the exhilarating knowledge that a romance was in the making.

On the following day a scented note bearing a wonderful coronet and crest was brought to me by René, the cowboy, and when, trembling with excitement, I opened

it, I read a charming invitation from Madame la Comtesse to go to the *château* that day for tea.

Without hesitation, I wrote a polite acceptance, and when René had left the room, eagerly examined my wardrobe.

I must do myself justice, I thought, as I carefully coiffeured my long pigtail into a grown-up fashion, and hurriedly let down a tuck in my best white frock. In spite of my caution not to be seen by the nuns, I ran into the Reverend Mother as I left the house. She did not make any comment when I told her I had been invited to the *château*.

Never shall I forget that tea party. In a wonderful room full of antique furniture, I sat on a gilt armchair beside the tall majestic Comtesse, whose hair, black as her son's, was fastened with an enormous gold filagree comb, set with amethysts, while in the lace *jabot* upon her ample bosom, an immense star of diamonds heaved up and down as she breathed. She was a remarkably handsome woman, and would have "screened" well as a gypsy adventuress. Indeed, I learned afterwards, that she was the daughter of a Spanish dancer, and that in marrying her the late Comte had incurred the wrath of his family.

My awed shyness soon evaporated beneath her gushing welcome, and after having regaled me with strawberries and cream, she suggested that her son and I should play tennis. He played atrociously, and when I had won two love sets, he led me back to the drawing-room, where the Comtesse, putting her arm round me, questioned me affectionately about my people.

"Your mother must keep a large staff of servants in India?" she inquired. And when I answered she had a

staff of over fifty, I was surprised by her obvious satisfaction, and noticed that she and her son exchanged glances.

They both accompanied me back to the convent in an antiquated-looking carriage, driven by an old coachman whose livery must have dated from the previous century. At the gates of the convent, as the Comte stood bareheaded and helped me from the carriage, his mother to my amazement took me in her arms.

"*Oh ma petite,*" she said, "how I long for a daughter such as you."

That was the beginning of my friendship with the owners of the *château* on the hill, and it ripened with amazing speed. Nearly every day the Comtesse would send the weird old carriage to take me to tea.

One day, by special request, I took my crystal. After tea I played a one-sided game of tennis with the Comte, who, by the way, was never now to be seen without an English grammar book in his hands. When we had finished our set, he led me to the summer-house, and there, to my amazement, went down on one knee and, before I could recover from my surprise, begged me to let him write to "*Monsieur le Général, mon père,*" and ask him for my hand. He spoke in voluble French, and as I stood tongue-tied, not knowing whether to laugh or be serious, he suddenly pressed his lips to my hand, and with an air of confident pride, exclaimed, "Sweet'art, you say, 'Yes, Sweet'art.'"

The loss of that one aspirate spoilt all the romance of the summer-house with its creeping roses, the garden with the sundial, and my handsome, immaculately dressed suitor, kneeling with such striking grace upon one knee. I horrified him by bursting into a silly

schoolgirl giggle. With furious dignity he rose to his feet, and as he did so his mother, who, I am certain, had been hiding outside to listen, entered and held out her arms to me.

"So, *ma petite chérie*," she exclaimed in her cooing voice, "you will make my Leo happy, as soon as *Monsieur le Général*, *ton père* will arrange for *ta dot*."

I gaped at her speechless. I had not said I would marry the Comte. And, all at once, I found myself contrasting my suitor with my father and the manly men amongst whom I had been brought up, and wondering what they would think of his hair brushed *à la brosse*, his "imperial," his delicately manicured hands, and, above all, the perfume which pervaded his clothes. At the same time I realized, aghast, that what had appeared just an exciting adventure had taken on a more serious aspect.

With a commanding air the Comtesse took my arm. "Come into my boudoir, *chérie*," she said, "while Leo will write to *ton père*, and after that you must look into your crystal and tell me how long it will be before you are living here, a bride."

I rallied my courage and faced her, stammering that I had not promised to marry her son. An ugly frown crossed her face. Then she smiled with her usual gushing affection.

"Love is not blind, *ma petite*," she said. "Leo does not want you to promise in words when day after day you have come here and shown him by action that you were not indifférent to his suit."

I did not answer. I was filled with a strange undefined dread of the woman whose great black eyes now stared with subtle menace into mine.

"Leo and I realize," she went on, "that *une jeune fille comme il faut*, the daughter of a general, could never be alone day after day with a young man unless she were ready to accept his love."

Without another word she led me to her boudoir, whither, in spite of my longing to get away, I followed her.

Alone with the woman whom I was beginning to fear, I looked into my crystal.

"You will tell me, *chérie*," she cooed, but her eyes had a hard glitter, "all you see, and if you will be *ma fille* this year."

Without speaking I looked into the ball. Slowly there formed a strange picture. I saw the woman beside me, her arms upraised, making strange passes with her hands before a man whom I recognized as her son. His eyes were closed as though he slept, but he moved slowly towards an elderly woman with grey hair. Once he paused, started and opened his eyes, and cowered back from the woman, who awaited him with outstretched arms. With a gesture that frightened me, the Comtesse motioned him on.

Every detail of the other woman's face was clear to me, and I was vaguely conscious that it was familiar. Suddenly I remembered! I had seen her in the chapel and had heard she was the daughter and heiress of the late Baron de K——, who had owned most of the lands of Trèguier.

I described her, and the Comtesse sprang to her feet. "It is impossible," she cried. "He will never marry her now. Her *dot* is not greater than that which your father, Monsieur le Général, will give you. Leo would only marry her if you were not the daughter of a rich

man." She waved her hands, "An English general with fifty servants must be rich."

Young as I was, I now saw that a mistaken idea of my father's worldly possessions was the reason for my popularity at the *château*.

As I made my way back to the Convent, I determined to write and ask my parents to take me away at once from that abode of monotony and love tangles.

Some weeks later came a cable. It was from my father, addressed to Le Comte de la M——, and ran : "My daughter will have no *dot*. Marriage impossible, unless you are wealthy."

Then the storm broke. The Comtesse came raging to the convent like a woman bereft of reason, and, as while I sat speechless and shivering with terror, stamped up and down my room, hurling a volley of abuse and execration at my head. She called me a penniless adventuress. She said my father must be a private ! She forbade me ever to see or speak to her son again, warning me that if I disobeyed her she would know. She would make him tell her in his sleep. As she spoke she waved her hands in the air, making strange passes like those which I had seen her make in the crystal.

At last, in a whirlwind of fury, she flounced out of the room, leaving behind her an odour of the sickening scent which Leo himself always used.

The next day the Comte found me alone upon the beach. He said I should have told him I was a pauper, and then, almost in tears, he paced up and down on the sand, assuring me that he worshipped me but that he dared not see me again as, if he did, he would be forced to tell his mother, who had a weird power over him.

She could make him tell her in his sleep, all he did, all he thought. She would force him, he said, to marry Mlle de K——, the heiress, who was older than himself, and he went on miserably that he had meant, before we married, to warn me that I must never let his mother into his room while he slept, as she would discover any secrets we might have. From his boyhood, he declared, she had had this hypnotic power.

That he spoke the truth I learned on the following day, when I received a furious letter from the Comtesse, telling me word for word what had passed between her son and myself, and the place and hour we had met. The letter concluded with the news that he had gone to lay his title, and heart, at the feet of a woman who was not *sans dot*.

So Leo de la M—— married the heiress of Trèguier. The next time I saw him was in the Cathedral at his wedding, when he led from the altar his grey-haired bride, the woman I had seen in the crystal. That same day I received a letter with an Indian postmark. It was from my father, and contained the following passage : " Don't let any more French fortune-hunters write to me. Anyway I imagine my cable will have choked off this one all right."

Not long afterwards I heard of the scandal which had convulsed Trèguier. The new Comtesse had bundled her mother-in-law out of her house and forbidden her ever to enter it again. She had been absent for a few days, and returned to find the old Comtesse in her son's room, making him, while he slept, repeat to her all that had transpired in his new life. Unsuspected, she listened, until she actually heard the black-haired woman urging her son, who spoke like someone in a

trance, to procure a certain sum of money belonging to his wife and give it to herself.

Feeling ran high in Trèguier when the new Comtesse de la M—— made public her discovery, and I had the satisfaction of seeing the ignominious departure of the woman, who, after hugging me to her bosom, had flung me from it with such violent vituperation.

My *affaire de cœur*, as le Comte de la M—— called it, did not tend to make me more settled in the monotonous routine of the cloisters, and I hailed with delight one result of my narrow escape from the maniac Ivor.

The mayor, Monsieur de V——, after sending me strawberries and flowers, had insisted that his wife, a rotund and red-faced little lady, much to his chagrin *sans enfants*, should invite me to join them in their yachting cruises round the coast.

Once more I sought the seclusion of Monsieur l'Aumônier's house, and begged him to intercede for me with the Superior, who since my romance with the much admired Comte, had treated me with cold displeasure, after having informed me that "the Convent being the door of Heaven, all nice-minded girls should leave thoughts of men *dehors!*" I knew, therefore, that if I asked her permission to go yachting, she would refuse. But a request from Monsieur l'Aumônier was another matter. Even though grudgingly, it would be granted. So I went to Monsieur l'Aumônier.

He shook his head, but left me to seek the Mother Superior. When he returned, his kind, open face was wreathed in smiles. He had obtained the permission I craved.

There was yet another favour which I wanted him to procure for me—permission to bathe alone. When I

first arrived, a forlorn little stranger, at the convent, there was, to my amazement, no bathroom at all. Later, however, the community was thrilled by the purchase from a Polish lady of a full-sized bath, which was installed in an outhouse for the benefit of such of *les dames*, *les pensionnaires* and *les élèves* who were willing to spend an occasional franc on water, soap and ablutions. None of *les élèves*, it appeared, were willing to do so, except myself, and I found to my horror when, having paid my franc, I made my way to the impromptu bathroom, where the bath was filled by lay sisters with cans of water, that I was to take my bath wrapped in a huge *peignoir*, which smelt of putrid rubber, while, in case I should drown, the most ancient nun of the Community, nicknamed *Grandmère*, was to sit by me and tell her beads.

I protested, but the old woman shook her head. *La Supérieure* had ordered it. I might get cramp. I might drown. When I flung the horrid-smelling *peignoir* from me, she threw up her hands in horror, demanding how I could wish to be so immodest as "to wash in my bare skin," adding in a pained and shocked voice, "What would the angels think?"

I told her I didn't care, and, in spite of her heated expostulations, pushed the *peignoir* out of the window, and entered my bath as I would have done at home.

Of course I was reported. Of course there was a row. I was informed that I must bathe with modest decorum in future or *pas de tout!* I realized that I must either wash in my small handbasin, *comme les autres*, or cheat myself into believing I was taking a bath smothered in the hateful *peignoir*.

Monsieur l'Aumônier again appeared my only salvation. Sitting on the edge of his parlour table, while he

sat beside me smoking his beloved old pipe, I asked him to make one more intercession and tell the Superior that I must be allowed to wash *à l'Anglaise, sans peignoir et sans audience !*

He tried to frown and look severe, as on the night when I got locked out, after having sneaked out to watch *le bal de la République*. I had forgotten all caution and had remained dancing with this and that *paysan*, until the last stroke of midnight echoing from the steeple reminded me, like Cinderella, that my number was up. It certainly was ! The Convent gates were fast shut. Even the faithful René, who slept over the cowshed, would not be awakened by my knocking. In despair I crept round to the Aumônier's gate and rang the bell. Presently a night-capped head looked out of an open window. It was the Aumônier himself. He scolded me and threatened to tell the Superior of my misdeeds, but he let me in. I was not perturbed by his threats. I knew he would say nothing. He was an ideal Aumônier. If, when I asked him to do anything, I put on a piteous voice, he always did it. So I put on a piteous voice and asked him to plead for me about the horrid-smelling *peignoir*, and he tactfully intimated to the Superior that, being English, I must follow my own immodest bent in the matter of *le bain !*

But to return to the mayor and his yachting invitation. The first occasion on which I was able to avail myself of it was a memorable one. I was rowed out by the mayor himself to the yacht, which was anchored near the harbour's mouth, and, after being greeted by the mayoress, was presented to some of the distinguished guests on board. The most distinguished of these was la Marquise de K——, an astonishingly broad lady,

who was flirting with the chief male guest, a retired Colonel des Cuirassiers, who fascinated me so much that I could scarcely keep my eyes from his amazing figure. He was clad in a bathing dress of scarlet and old gold, and round his shoulders he wore a cloak of scarlet towelling, which he swung with martial pride. But what fascinated me most of all were his legs and feet. The former, which reminded me of the Biblical description of Esau, were adorned with scarlet and old gold ribbons, apparently designed to hold upon his feet a pair of canvas shoes, on which were embroidered his coat of arms. A straw hat of Buffalo Bill dimensions, also trimmed with scarlet and old gold, completed one of the most astounding yachting costumes I have ever seen.

Away from Trèguier the yacht flew before the wind, until the anchor was dropped among some islands, where those intent on shrimping and crab-sticking went ashore to hunt in the pools. Revelling in the sport, I watched the mayor and his mate stick one round-backed crab after another, and fished for prawns until my net was so heavy that the Colonel gallantly took it from me. But I was very sorry that I had accepted his gallantry when, a few minutes later, uttering an exclamation which made the Mayor himself change colour, he trod upon a jelly fish and sat down with appalling violence in an enormous pool, right on the edge of a jutting rock. As he rubbed himself and shouted expressions of fury, all my treasured prawns flitted away to freedom once more. Still, as the Mayor comforted me by saying we had plenty more, and when at last, long after sunset, we sat in the yacht making for land, I thought I had never known such an amusing day.

As the tide was running 'low, the Marquise had ordered her two-horse wagonette to meet us at a little bay some miles distant from the town where the landing was easy. So, leaving the crew to sail the yacht back to Trèguier, the Mayor and his wife, with the rest of the party, climbed into the wagonette, in the depths of which an ancient groom, the exact counterpart of the still more ancient *cocher*, deposited his mistress's portion of the day's spoil, a large basketful of the hump-backed crabs, a couple of lobsters, and some fish.

Along the quiet lanes we drove, listening more or less drowsily to the Colonel recounting his military and love exploits whilst in command of his Cuirassiers, until suddenly all sleepiness was banished by the most ear-splitting yells I have ever heard.

I stared at Madame la Marquise in speechless amazement, wondering if the day's outing had sent her stark, staring mad. With the energy of a large Indian rubber ball, she bounced up and down, holding up her skirts, while with frenzied movements she snatched and dragged at her anatomy in the region of her thighs. The coachman, startled by the uproar, seemed to balance unsteadily on the box while the footman forgot himself so far as to stand up open-mouthed.

Then followed a scene I shall never forget. As everyone uttered exclamations and inquiries in divers keys, the Colonel with praiseworthy intelligence, realized that the Marquise was suffering, not from sudden madness, but from bodily pain. And even as, with startling abandonment, she lifted her garments still higher, he pounced forward, snatching at the shellfish, which, beneath their folds, were clinging, with diabolical tenacity, to her flesh.

Unnoticed, the lid of the basket in the bottom of the wagonette had been opened by the wriggling and indignant crabs. Unnoticed, some of the topmost had contrived to embed their claws in a soft portion of the Marquise's body.

Pale and scarlet by turns, the Mayor's wife ordered the gentlemen of the party to leave the wagonette, while she told us to spread out our petticoats to make a screen, behind which the Colonel, with an apopleptic countenance, endeavoured to release the yelling Marquise from her tormentors.

With surprising skill for a life-long bachelor he ripped open the poor lady's ample underwear, and after an interval of anguish to the lady, succeeded in forcing open the claws of the two huge crabs.

Then the panic spread and screams of the Marquise were echoed by the rest of us, as we scrambled for safety. The interior of the wagonette had become alive with creeping, sliding crabs. In her struggles with the Colonel, the Marquise had kicked and overturned the basket.

The sport in the deep pools was re-enacted with added zest, as men armed with spears once more flung back the escaping booty into the basket.

Half fainting, the Marquise wept, whimpering at intervals to all who tried to comfort her that she had brought the awful tragedy upon herself by having so far forgotten *noblesse oblige*, as to go out in the boat of a man whose ancestor had insulted her own, and who was nothing better than a socialist! Whether the Mayor heard or not, I do not know. But the feud, which, I was told, had existed for centuries between the family of the Marquise and his own, and had only recently

been healed, was reopened with redoubled vigour. So long as I went yachting with the Mayor and his wife, I never again saw the poor Marquise aboard.

About this time a passionate longing to go on the stage took possession of me, and fired by my success in an amateur play, produced in the convent at the request of the Superior, on which occasion I played the part of Joan of Arc, with my hair hidden beneath a helmet, I ran away to make my fortune at Dinon, where I got an engagement to sing English songs in the Café Anglais. The sight of a school-girl singing Scots ballads tickled and pleased the manager and the crowd who came there, and I felt myself indeed on the wave of fame, with my name "Miss Nell Smith" scrawled upon the mirrors on either side of the stage, where terribly underclad and painted ladies performed and laughed loudly at my convent-made dress and low-heeled shoes. But I must pay a tribute both to them and the manager of the café, and the throng of men, mostly soldiers, who applauded for three nights my rendering of "Caller Herrin'" and other Scots ditties. They never showed me anything but an amused kindness, and the *préfet* of police, who had two daughters himself, as he told me, when he insisted upon making my acquaintance, solemnly conducted me every night to the door of the little hotel where I had taken a room !

Whether he was the cause of my venture being nipped in the bud, I never discovered, but on the third evening, as I finished "Auld Lang Syne" to the applause of clanking swords and cries of *Bis, bis !* I nearly dropped on the stage from fright, for sipping coffee at the table next to the stage was Monsieur l'Aumônier himself !

REVELATIONS OF A

Back he took me to *les Sœurs de la Croix*, unrepentant and depressed, to listen to a lengthy lesson preached by the Superior upon my crimes.

Then, in answer to my letters begging my parents to take me away from the convent, arrived the glad news that they were coming home to England.

Thé only regret that I felt on saying farewell to France was for my two dearest friends, the kind-hearted Aumônier, who really did mop away genuine tears in his bandana handkerchief, after wishing me godspeed, and the little lay sister, Sœur St. André, one of the sweetest, holiest creatures I have ever known, who, in spite of my high spirits and mischief, loved me devotedly.

As she stood beside my bed the night before I left, she took my hands. "It can't be a great sin for me to ask you, *chérie*, but look in your crystal and see when we shall meet again?" Willingly I did as she asked me, but as the vision formed before my eyes, I grew afraid. In the shadow of the chapel I saw the little nun. She was leaning against the portals, and beside her, sisters of the community were bending. I distinctly saw her hand pressed against her side, while her eyes, wide and unseeing, stared up into mine.

I must have started, for she uttered an exclamation. "What is it, *petite*?" she asked quickly. "Do you see *le malheur*?" I shook my head and, telling a white lie, assured her I could only see nuns near a chapel, and tried to divert her attention.

But later, as she kissed me good night, she held me in her arms, "*Ma petite*," she said, "will you promise me that before you go to *le bon Dieu* you will in spirit come and say good-bye to me, even as I swear that, if I am

called the first, I will come to you ? ” She spoke with a solemnity and earnestness which half frightened me. I tried to laugh, however, and in the rush of events which followed I forgot her words. For soon after, when on a visit to Ireland, I met my husband, Henry Standish-Barry, J.P., of Leamlara, the nephew of Viscount Southwell, K.P., and after a very short engagement, found myself living in the heart of the country, the wife of a country squire, on a picturesque old property, where my husband's ancestors had lived for nine hundred years. The place teemed with ancient legends and superstitions ; and in the walls of the house, which had taken the place of the original castle, the ruins of which stood upon a mound surrounded by a moat where archæological search parties were continually finding strange old weapons, was a priest's hiding hole, and subterranean passages led from the house to the old castle.

It was two years later that Sœur St. André's promise was brought back to my memory with startling force.

I was alone in my dressing-room, getting ready to attend a race meeting. It was a wonderfully fine morning for Ireland, and the sun was streaming through the windows, but, suddenly I was conscious of a strange chill. It was as though the room had all at once grown terribly cold. Convinced that someone had come in, I turned quickly to the door. What I saw amazed me. For, there, on the threshold, stood the little lay sister, Sœur St. André. The sunlight glinted on the silver cross with its crown of thorns on her breast, on the whiteness of her *coiffe*. Forgetting for the moment that I was in county Cork, miles from a station, and that she was in Brittany, unable to leave her Cloisters, I ran across the room, my hands outstretched, asking her eagerly how

she had come there. But when I reached her I stopped afraid. Although I saw her just as I had seen her last, I realized that this black-habited girl was not in the flesh.

Fascinated, I stared from her little pale face with the white *coiffe* to her small clasped hands, roughened with the hard work of her calling. Then, as she did not answer when I spoke, terror seized me and I rushed to the bell. Looking over my shoulder I still saw her, and it seemed as if her great eyes reproached me for my fear. The next moment, as my maid, startled by my violent ringing, hurried in, Sœur St. André had gone.

That night in answer to the telegram I sent to the convent in Brittany, came the Superior's reply. "Sœur St. André died suddenly, this morning, of heart disease." As she was entering the chapel she had fallen against the pillar, her hands to her side, even as I had seen her in the crystal. But in the moment of parting she had remembered her solemn promise to me. She had come in farewell !

On one or two other occasions I have seen the spirits of those I love come back to me from the Other Side, and on one occasion, although I did not actually see an apparition, I was in real touch with another's spirit. In the heart of the Sahara, given up by the doctor, one of my dearest friends lay dying. He had been in charge of the guns of a punitive expedition which had been sent against a rebel Sultan. For months and months I had had no news, but considering the nature of the expedition, and the distance, it might well have been impossible to get news through.

One night, however, I woke trembling, convinced

that my friend had spoken to me across the division of space I had seen him in a dream, lying in a tent, haggard and ill, and stretching out his hands, he had spoken my name, telling me we should never dance together again

Three years later, when I told him about my dream and how I had heard his voice, he eagerly asked me the date I told him On that very night, he said, he had believed he was dying The doctor had held out no hope and he had made all arrangements for someone to carry on in his stead, and had spoken my name in farewell My dream of the tent and surroundings, as I described it, had been true in every detail

In the year 1918 came another crushing proof that those we love are near us, in spite of space The same friend had gone to France, leaving me his faithful fox terrier, the mascot of his battery, to keep until his return Some weeks after his departure, I awoke on the night to hear, clearly and distinctly, his well-known voice call my name three times Convinced that the dog's master had come home unexpectedly from the Front, and had somehow gained admittance to the house, where I was living with an old lady, I sprang up to open the door Cowering on my bed, "Stannie" was shaking and whimpering as if afraid

I ran down the stairs, calling the dog to follow, and I went through all the rooms They were empty My friend, the old lady, was furious with me for having awakened her She said the servants had let no one in, but the cook voiced my own instinctive terror Staring at the moaning dog, she shook her head "Perhaps the poor creature knows somehow the Major's dead," she exclaimed, with unintentionally brutal bluntness

I went back to my room in bewilderment, sure that I had been called, while the dog crouched in a corner, moaning and shivering. He was a little "sport" who had never known what fear was, for the war's most terrible barrage only made him growl in defiance, and the loudest thundering of guns pleased him. He was a gunner's pet.

For a week nothing would induce him to eat. At last in despair I called in a Vet, who declared that the animal was suffering from acute shock and suggested shell-shock from the raids. But I knew he was wrong. For days we had to force food down his throat, until little by little he ate of his own accord. But for weeks he would lie, a miserable little heap, guarding one of his loved master's gloves. Then, after long heart-breaking suspense, came the official news. My friend had been blown to pieces, standing gallantly beside his guns and men, on the very night when his dog and I, who loved him, for the last time heard his voice.

CHAPTER IV

A BRAVE MAN'S DUTY

It was a wonderfully fine day for the South of Ireland, and the sun, glinting on the harbour of Queenstown, heightened the brilliance of colour which draped the flagship of the Atlantic Fleet. The busy Admiralty tugs, fussing to and from the flagship with loads of guests, betrayed the fact that the officers were "At Home," and were entertaining the county folk and the officers and wives of the neighbouring garrison towns of Cork and Fermoy.

It was a brilliant scene, and as I was guided across the deck to the strains of a popular waltz played by the excellent ship's band, my partner, the Commander, said, "You promised me at the Admiralty House dinner last night that you would bring the crystal to-day. Have you?"

As I nodded, he told me he would spirit me away to the cabin, there to hold a short *séance*.

He was a typical sailor, tall, extraordinarily handsome, and with an air of physical strength which had earned him the nickname of "Gripper," and rumour whispered that the sailor's reputation for a wife in every port was not in his case unjustified. So I was quite prepared, when I looked into the crystal in the secluded quiet of his cabin, with its array of pictured feminine attraction, to see the reflection of some startling love story. But I certainly was not prepared for the awful vision which slowly, clearly, formed before my eyes. I saw women's

faces, certainly, but distorted, disfigured with terror and stained with blood. I saw women's bodies, bleeding and torn, devoid of clothes or covering, apparently strewn on the floor of the very cabin in which I stood, and amongst them I saw the figure of the man beside me.

I stared speechless and fascinated by the very horror of the vision, and, as if rendered curious by the expression of my face, the Commander asked me quickly to tell him what I saw. When I hesitated, he touched my arm.

"Tell me," he said. "I don't mind what it is."

Without moving my eyes from the horrible scene of carnage, I told him. I described the blood-stained women, writhing as if in mental and physical torment before him. I told him that in his own bunk I saw a girl, from whose naked shoulders trickled blood; her arms had apparently been hacked off.

Realizing that I was in dead earnest, the man beside me did not laugh. But, shrugging his broad shoulders, he shook his head. "The crystal can't be infallible," he exclaimed. "How on earth could such a thing happen?"

He pointed to the ball lying on the table and asked me to look again and see if it reflected something less gruesome and more probable. I did as he asked me, and this time there came the picture of a tall slight woman, standing between two men. 'The one I recognized as my companion, the other was a smaller man dressed also in naval uniform. As the figures moved and the vision developed, I gathered that the man at my side had betrayed his brother officer, and the ball was shadowed by countless legal papers and documents, indicating divorce. I described exactly what I saw, and the Commander laughed.

"Your crystal doesn't like me," he exclaimed.

"First of all it shows you my cabin as a female charnel-house, in which I look like some butcher, and then it reflects me as the co-respondent in a divorce!"

He rose, held out his cigarette case, and led me out on deck to dance. He never asked me to look in the crystal again, and when others did, I noticed he would smile sarcastically. Shortly afterwards, he went abroad, and for a year I did not hear from him. Then one day I got a letter with the ship's crest.

"I must write and tell you," the letter ran, "that every word of your horrible vision in the crystal has come true to the very letter. My cabin has been a very charnel-house, filled with mutilated dying women, rescued from the awful earthquake at Messina. We went to the rescue. I may tell you that one figure you described as being 'armless,' as it lay on my bunk, was that of a poor girl buried alive beneath some stones. She managed to free her arms to signal for help, and because of the valuable rings and bracelets she wore, some of the murderous pillagers of the island slashed the arms right off." The letter then went on to give more terrifying details. At the end was a postscript. "Although every word of the carnage vision has come true, I am *not*, and do not expect ever to be a co-respondent in a divorce case."

For years after receiving this letter, I heard nothing of the handsome commander. But one day, in an amazing way, his face suddenly stared into my own from the depths of my crystal.

A man had come to consult me, and as I looked into the crystal I saw reflected a picture of trouble. His wife had let him down. She had fallen in love with one of his brother officers and a divorce had followed. As I described what I saw, the man paced the room, assuring

me that every word I spoke was true. As vision after vision formed and faded, I was able to tell him of happiness that lay in store for him, and of another who would restore his broken faith in women.

Then the crystal seemed to be obscured by a black mist, out of which I saw clearly the face of a handsome fair-haired man. Startled, I peered closer. Although I had lost all touch with him, although he had gone out of my mind, the scene in the cabin at Queenstown immediately came back to me. In my ears echoed the Commander's disbelieving laugh.

I raised my eyes and met those of the man watching me.

"Do you know a man called Commander C——?" I asked.

For a second he stared at me; then his face grew pale.

"God!" he exclaimed. "Why do you ask? Why do you mention that one name of all others?"

I did not answer and his eyes followed mine as they rested on the crystal.

"That was the man who stole my wife from me," he went on. "He was the cause of our ruined happiness, and divorce." He stopped short. "Why did you ask me?" he went on, trembling with agitation. "Tell me that."

I held up my crystal. "I saw his face reflected here," I answered slowly. "I have not seen him for years, but I recognized him."

It was a strange proof of the vivid correctness of a vision seen years ago in the crystal, and the very faithfulness of it convinced the man who had so suffered that the other vision which had foretold happiness for him would also come true.

I can never as long as I live forget another incident in connection with a sailor. This time it related to a man who served in the ex-Kaiser's navy.

A German cruiser had come into the bay, and after two weeks' stay the captain and officers, who had spent their time "mysteriously nosing round," as my soldier servant expressed it, sent out invitations to an "At Home" on board.

The cruiser's decks, usually none too clean—in glaring contrast to the spotlessness of those of our navy—had been scrubbed, and the pigsties on board thoroughly cleaned out, and the captain and officers in white kid gloves received their guests. I was included in the party from Admiralty House, where I was staying with the wife of the Admiral then commanding, Sir R. C——, an old friend of mine.

To our surprise, after being greeted by the portly, black-bearded captain and several of his officers, we were at once conducted with much *empressement* to a cabin, which, we were informed, had been set apart especially for our party. Our surprise increased when the captain informed us that all our refreshments would be brought there to obviate our mixing with the other guests.

In vain Lady C—— assured him that she and her husband and daughter and friends would like to meet them. Our host could not, or would not, understand. So, watching my opportunity, I slipped out and made my way on deck, determined to see who were the others to be regaled with cold sausages as afternoon-tea delicacies.

As was usual, all the officers of the Kaiser's cruiser had been entertained at Admiralty House, and at a dance given in their honour had met a great many of the principal county families.

To my amazement, as I wandered round the deck, I did not meet one of the friends or acquaintances I expected to see. Dancing to the strains of the ship's orchestra, leaning over the rails beneath the awnings, or accepting iced drinks and unfamiliar meat appetizers from N.C.O.'s in their much be-buttoned uniforms, I saw, dressed in amazing toilettes which lacked nothing but good taste, the wives and daughters of the R.C. tradespeople of the town. One group especially caught my eye. In a magenta costume of silk and a hat adorned with green plumage, to give a "patriotic" touch, was a Roman Catholic bishop's sister, escorted by a country canon, talking in excited undertones to the stout and perspiring wife of a publican, who mopped her brow in a handkerchief bedecked with coloured lace. Near her, smoking a cigarette, I recognized the fair-haired wife of the editor of the anti-English local daily.

Not one representative of a county family was there. Neither were the womenfolk of the officers stationed at Cork or the neighbourhood.

Trade was personified in the figures of men in slouch or antiquated tall hats, who strutted on deck representing the callings of butcher, baker, candlestick-maker, and, more especially, the liquor trade. Our hosts were evidently intent, for some reason, on ingratiating themselves not with the quality but with the quantity of the inhabitants.

I had not read strange visions in Ireland in my crystal for nothing, and at once the idea flashed into my mind that a political motive must underlie this unusual social function. As I stood undecided whether to return to Lady C—— or not, the captain came towards me.

Bowing with great pomposity, he invited me to par-

take of some refreshment, and, struggling against my natural dislike for obese and bearded Germans, I forced a smile and accepted. Shouting an order to an N.C.O. to bring drinks, he led me to an alcove sheltered by flags. There, as I sipped claret cup, declining, to his apparent vexation, to partake of a slice of sausage with my cake, he began to catechize me.

Of course I had been to Germany?

No? Then, it was indeed a pity I did not know the attractions of that country. But of course, I spoke German?

Conscious that he was leaning uncomfortably near, and that one of his hot hands, crushed into a glove some sizes too small, was endeavouring to press my own, I edged away and answered rather shortly in the negative.

"It iz not fair," he complained, patting the left side of his corporation with absurd pathos. "Ve always learn your language, vy do you not learn ours?"

Once more I felt the irritating squeeze of his fingers on my arm, and I had a horrible suspicion that his black beard was not an inch from my own cheek. Icily I looked at him, and met the fatuous expression apparently meant for admiration in his small eyes.

"There is no need for us to learn your language when English is the language of the world," I answered curtly.

In a moment his face changed. The insinuating, bold admiration in his eyes died away, to give place to a light of arrogant fury, while his whole figure stiffened until it appeared to lose some of its corpulence.

"Ach." His fingers clenched upon the piece of cake he held.

"Zat will not be always zo."

He spoke quickly, his voice trembling with indignation.

I laughed.

"Of course it will . . ." I looked at him steadily.

As if he regretted his outburst, he bowed punctiliously and offered me another iced drink.

But I had had enough of iced drinks. I had had more than enough of his company and proximity, and, rising to my feet, I announced my intention of going back to the Admiral and his party. As I did so, an officer approached us, and rather reluctantly my companion introduced him as his commander. The tall, well-built man whose clear cut features and refined, distinguished appearance were in striking contrast to his own coarse obesity, saluted, and looking at me intently asked for a dance.

For a moment I hesitated, and then, seeing that he was not cut to the pattern of my host, who had tried to force sausage meat and equally unpleasant attentions upon me, I accepted. Leaving the captain to entertain other more willing guests, I soon found myself being deftly guided, to the echo of a waltz, across the crowded deck.

Something about my partner aroused my interest. He had a subdued, undefined air of tragedy which quickened my sympathy. Somehow, I thought, he struck a wrong note in the display of coarse manhood around. His very refinement and indescribable, wistful melancholy stirred my curiosity, and when, the dance finished, he offered to show me over the ship, I assented gladly.

As he led me away from the deck, I stopped to watch two yachts racing beyond the distant point, and following

the direction of my eyes, he asked me if it would interest me to see his own racing cups.

I said it would, and he led me downstairs, where, pulling open some curtains, he invited me into his cabin.

I looked round curiously at the photographs on the wall, and, my attention being caught by the picture of a creeper-covered house with ancient towers and battlements, I asked where it was.

"It was once my father's home."

He spoke quietly, but I was struck by the under-current which made his voice unsteady. I looked closer at the picture.

"But surely," I asked, "that is not in Germany?"

He shook his head, and for a moment averted his eyes. Then he drew himself up.

"You are right," he answered. "It is not in Germany. It is——" his voice shook ever so slightly—"Alsace-Lorraine."

I looked at him intently. Now I understood the subtle air of melancholy which clung round him. For a moment I did not speak, but my thoughts flew back to my life in France, and my visit to Alsace-Lorraine.

"If there is war again between France and Germany," I said at last, "you will be torn between two duties."

His face stiffened, and his eyes met mine as if he were trying to fathom my thoughts. He shook his head.

"I have one duty—one only," he said in a low voice.

"Your duty to your own country?" My longing to probe beneath his mask of reserve and dignified aloofness forced me to ask the question.

He did not answer at once. Then he stepped nearer and smiled into my upturned face.

"In the cabin, just now, the Admiral told us you are

a most wonderful clairvoyante—"Won't you tell me my fortune, and answer that question for yourself?"

He spoke half banteringly, but his eyes were fixed searchingly on my face.

I nodded assent and asked him for a hand mirror. Apologizing for its plainness, he gave me a round shaving glass. With my left hand resting lightly against his, I stared down into it.

Visions, blurred and clear, began to form, and as they did so I described them. Every now and again an exclamation of surprise would fall from his lips.

"That is my mother." His voice was very low. "You have described her as I saw her last. . . ."

I peered closer into the mirror. Silhouetted against a back-ground of smoke and fire, I saw the man beside me, bareheaded, his dark hair falling in disorder about his white set face. His arms were pinioned to his side—his shirt open above his breast. . . . Before him, his right hand raised as though in anger, loomed the figure of the man I had just left. . . . In a whirling mist other faces appeared and faded—the faces of men who stared with rage and loathing at the pinioned wretch. They moved suddenly—I saw arms uplifted, hands grasping rifles. . . .

I shrank back shuddering from the glass. Only with an effort could I look once again. This time there formed the misty outline of a white, still face, whose eyes, open wide, stared upwards—away from the crimson splash, oozing beneath. . . .

Sick with horror I dropped the glass, and my hand fell from that of the man who stood motionless beside me. His eyes met mine, and a strange smile parted his lips.

"Tell me what you saw," he asked.

I did not answer, and he stood up very straight.

"I believe you have power," he said slowly. "I believe—— You *see*."

He lifted his hand as if in salute.

"Do you know now without my telling you, to whom I owe my first duty? Is it as wonderful to you as it seems to me," he asked, and his vibrating voice, touched me strangely, "that you, a stranger, have won my soul's trust?"

As I hastened to tell him that all I saw in occult visions was immediately obliterated from my mind unless I wrote it down, he smiled.

"I need no assurance," he exclaimed, "for I too, can read beneath the surface, and I know a secret would be safe in your care."

Then his manner changed, and with an assumption of light gaiety, he showed me photos and trophies of other countries. I glanced at the rows of silver cups, to see which had been the motive of my visit, and following the direction of my eyes, the Commander took up a large goblet.

"This is the Kaiser's Cup which I had the privilege to win," he said. As I looked at it, noticing the engraving of an arrogant face upon the surface, he fixed his eyes at the representation of his Emperor.

"At heart, of course, the Kaiser takes no real interest in yacht-racing," he said. "He takes less in the navy." He shrugged his shoulders, ever so slightly. "His hobby is the army."

Heedless of the time, we talked on, until we were startled to hear, coming through the open porthole, the strains of the National Anthem, played by indifferent German performers.

I was aghast as I thought of the Admiral's party inquiring my whereabouts, but the man beside me smiled reassuringly.

"The Captain ordered champagne to be handed round in the Admiral's cabin before they left," he said. "So you will not be late."

As he lifted the curtains to let me pass out, I stopped, and looked at him keenly.

"Will you tell me," I asked, "why you have invited all the local Roman Catholics here to-day and not the Protestant county people?"

He did not answer, but I saw the contemptuous curling of his lips.

"Is it," I lowered my voice, and looking him intently in the face, "because these others are easily perverted from loyalty, and make good spies?"

His eyes met mine, and in their depths I thought I read a corroboration of my thoughts. But still he did not answer. Bowing, he raised my hand and pressed it to his lips.

"I hope we may meet again—soon," he said.

His eyes grew grave, and, half-hesitatingly he gave me a card, with the name Albert G——, Commander, and asked permission to write. As he saw the surprise in my face, he fidgeted awkwardly with the curtain which he was holding.

"You, of all on this ship, know the truth," he said, "and I would love to think that I can count you a friend—who, understanding, keeps silence, for something tells me that you too love your country, as I do mine."

I gave him my card and we promised that the acquaintanceship begun on the Kaiser's ship was not to be that of "ships that pass in the night." Then, for a moment, we both stood silent.

Here in this great ship teeming with unavowed hostility, I knew that one man stood aloof, one man lived in enforced exile. On his cap he wore the Kaiser's sign. On his heart was engraved another seal. At length he broke the tenseness with some commonplace remark; and chatting on ordinary topics, we reached the deck, where we watched the gaily-clad women with their male escorts all more or less unsteady from unwonted and unlimited champagne and other wine, regain their places in the waiting launches.

The Captain glared at us as he escorted Lady C—— and the Admiral towards us, but my mind was too occupied in puzzling out a mystery to pay attention to his evident displeasure.

Later, as we entered the launch, I glanced up to see a tall man standing on deck, a little apart from the others, his hand raised in salute. Following the direction in which I was looking, the Admiral wiped his perspiration-covered face.

"The only decent fellow on board, that!" he exclaimed. Then he bit his lips furiously. "Of all the unheard-of pieces of insolence, to invite us to meet that crowd——!"

He stopped short as if words failed him.

Heedless of his indignation, I gazed at the flag-decorated ship. Motionless, aloof, the Commander stood, his eyes fixed intently upon our hurrying launch. He interested me as few people had ever done. The vision in the glass, which I later wrote down, filled me with a presentiment, and made me eager to see him again.

But though he wrote to me from time to time, his ship did not come again to Queenstown, and we never met.

After the declaration of war, of course, his letters ceased, and in the rush of events the episode of the "F——" nearly faded from my mind. Many months later it was vividly and unexpectedly recalled. I received a letter which, though the envelope which contained it bore an English postmark, was written in French, in a small copperplate hand, and bore the address of a hospital in Belgium.

"Dear Madame,

News has reached us that our brother Albert has met the death of a traitor and spy at the hands of the Germans. He succeeded in warning his own countrymen on a French battleship of their danger.

Before he left he asked me, in the event of his not returning, to send you the enclosed. He said you would understand. He knew no fear. It is our consolation."

The letter was signed, "Rudolph G——," and it concluded with a postscript, stating that a wounded English soldier, who was returning home, would post the letter to ensure its safe arrival. Enclosed was the photograph of the old turreted house which had hung in the cabin of the Commander of the "F——." At the back was written in English in a familiar hand,

"My one duty—my country."

And beneath, "Adieu. Albert G——."

Across the space of time I seemed to see again, slowly forming in the depths of a mirror, the vision I had seen, and afterwards recorded, when a man with grave proud eyes had stood facing his condemners.

Then, even as he had said—*I understood.*

CHAPTER V

A VISION OF THE TOWER

DURING the time I spent in Ireland I found ample use for my crystal, and had the unique experience of reading it in an old house, in the grounds of which an unfortunate woman had only a hundred years before been burned at the stake as a witch.

Knowing nothing of this event, I looked one day into the crystal for the owner of the house, and was horrified to see the reflection of a woman, drawn and pallid, in the glare of leaping flames. Not only I myself but members of the family heard the sound of piercing screams.

Old documents proved that the woman, who had been born with undoubted second sight and had foretold events which had come to pass, had been burned alive, and her dying screams, it was stated, were heard for years afterwards by all who passed through the demesne.

It was when I was staying with Sir Henry and Lady Blake in their wonderful old house at Youghal, that Sir Henry one evening brought me an article wrapped in a handkerchief.

"I won't tell you what it is," he said, "but I want to put it on your crystal and see what vision will appear to you."

After he had laid the object on the crystal for a few minutes, he took it away without my having even touched it.

For some time I sat motionless, my eyes fixed upon the ball. Slowly a strange scene appeared. I saw, dressed in clothes of a long past period, a slight man with a pointed beard, who, with clasped hands, paced what appeared to be a tiny room, the only light in which filtered through heavily barred slits. I described the vision minutely, and Sir Henry, remaining perfectly silent, made notes.

"It is amazing," he exclaimed, when I had finished. "You have described the room in the Tower where Sir Walter Raleigh, whose pipe was wrapped in that handkerchief and laid upon the crystal, was a prisoner."

Years before the late Sir James Cotter died with such tragic suddenness, I heard the galloping of the phantom horse connected with the family. His younger brother was in the room with me at the time in a house in County Cork. It was a cold November night, and as we sat beside a log fire, I shuddered as I listened to the steady downpour without, and the howling of the wind in the trees. It was one of those ghastly, depressing nights of incessant rain so characteristic of the South of Ireland.

Suddenly I started and listened. I heard distinctly the clattering of hoofs. They seemed to be galloping away, as if from the interior of the house. I glanced at the clock. It was past ten—much too late for even a belated foxhunter to be riding down the avenue.

I looked at my companion. He was a young, strikingly handsome man, renowned for his dare-devil pluck. His expression startled me. There was an unfamiliar look, almost of dread, in his usually laughing eyes.

"What is wrong, Tommy?" I asked.

He jerked his head in the direction from which the sound came.

"A Cotter always hears that—before death or danger," he exclaimed. He stood up and leaned beside the fireplace. "It's a queer story," he went on. "And it's queer we should hear that now, for it was from this very place that the original horse was ridden to save my ancestor."

I listened in surprise. Although I had been in the house some time, I had never heard anything of the story.

"One of my ancestors, years and years ago," Tommy Cotter said, "was tried and convicted for some offence, and condemned to death. His great friend was the original owner of the house you are in now, and he determined, as he had influence at Court, to try and get a reprieve for the condemned man. In spite of all his efforts, however, the reprieve only reached him in County Cork the day before that fixed for his friend's execution in Dublin.

"With the pardon in his great-coat pocket, he galloped away from here on his favourite horse. The animal went at full speed for miles, and never stopped until he fell dead. My ancestor got another and continued his journey to Dublin. He reached the prison gates a few minutes before the appointed hour for the execution, only to find that owing to some treachery his friend, my ancestor, had been hanged a quarter-of-an-hour too soon. When he returned, he had the body of his favourite horse brought here, and, the legend goes, the skeleton is buried somewhere in this building. But where, no one has discovered."

He stopped short, listening.

Away in the distance we heard the sound of tearing hoofs growing fainter, then—silence. I shivered, but he smiled.

"When the hoofs gallop away into the distance," he said, "it is only a warning against a danger."

The reason for the warning was not long in doubt. The very next day, Tommy Cotter narrowly escaped death. A friend drove him in his car with reckless speed along a perilous road on the edge of some cliffs, and Tommy, generally contemptuous of all danger, after vainly urging him to drive more carefully, managed to spring unhurt from the car. He was just in time. A moment later the motor lay overturned, a wreck, with his friend pinned helpless and stunned beneath it. But for the warning of the galloping hoofs the night before, Tommy Cotter declared, he would never have tried to save himself, and would probably have shared his friend's fate.

Some months afterwards, workmen employed in reboarding the very room in which Tommy Cotter and I had been sitting when we heard the mysterious hoofs came excitedly to me, declaring that they had discovered a horse's skeleton beneath the boards.

I hurried to the room, and saw they had spoken the truth. The poor animal which had been ridden to his death by his master in a vain effort to save his friend lay buried beneath the room. I insisted that it should not be disturbed, and so it was allowed to remain.

Years afterwards, in town, Sir James Cotter (Tommy's elder brother) asked me to look into the crystal for him. When I did so I was aghast to see a vision of a riderless galloping horse. As I looked at my companion, I thought I had never seen a more perfect picture of healthy manhood. Surely the warning in my crystal must be false.

Without mentioning what the crystal had shown me,

I looked again. This time the vision was connected with Sir James's work.

Some weeks later I was appalled to read in the papers that Sir James Cotter had dropped dead suddenly on his honeymoon. Had he heard, I asked myself, the echo of those hoofs?

Propos of horses, although I did not hunt, I used to do the "Fowl Damages" for some time for a popular soldier M. F. H., and it did not need my crystal to open my eyes to the astounding gift of the country inhabitants of the distressful isle for turning the natural ailments of their livestock into damages executed by some phantom fox. Lambs dying from woolballs were alleged to have been eaten up by some hungry Reynard; chickens succumbing to attacks of pip were declared to have suffered the same fate; and even the loss of a cow falling into a bog to drown would be placarded against the hunt, the creature being alleged to have lost its life through having been hunted to the fatal spot by mythical hounds!

Claims were so bewilderingly lengthy and varied that the Master and I decided not to pay damages except on receiving proof of the alleged massacres. So, much to my secret nausea and dismay, I had to face the mangled carcases.

One Sunday morning, the butler came to tell me that a man wished to see me on urgent business. When I went into the hall, I found a dirty bearded farmer, and before the open door a donkey and cart, laden with much straw. In one hand the old man held some feathered remains, which he brandished in my face.

"Begorra, yer Honour," he shrieked, "thin oi'm afther bringing ye the carcase av one av me wife's

hineens* that the fox is afther killing." He glanced at the donkey cart.

"An' haven't Oi brought too the grand turkey cock birrd what hersilf was afther paying five pounds for, that the fox took?"

I nodded. "Let me see the turkey," I said curtly.

"Yes, yer Honour," he went on. "She was afther paying five pounds what she saved from her eggs this year to buy him. He was a foine birrd. Sivin pounds won't buy another loike him now, after all the fading he's been afther gitting."

Unmoved, I informed him I could not pay him one penny until I had seen the remains. He shuffled uneasily.

"Sure, an Oi've brought him," he answered, scratching his none too cleanly beard.

"But yer Honour it's not a nice soight for yc, the poor birrd is that mangled and smills fram bein' lying in the wet."

I repeated that unless I saw the remains of the prize turkey, I could pay nothing. Uttering continued warnings in the interests of my eyes and nose, the old man shuffled to the cart, and from the depths of the straw took out, with apparent sorrow, a mass of dirty grey feathers. Waving the body of the bird in the air, he pushed it quickly once more under the straw. I looked at him sternly.

"Bring that bird here," I commanded.

He gave me a sharp look, and then, as if misunderstanding me, picked up the hen.

"You think because I am English that you can fool me," I exclaimed, as I regarded the dead heron, its

beak broken, its legs cut short, with which he had hoped to gull me.

For a moment the man seemed nonplussed. Then scratching his matted hair, he whistled.

"Begob, yer Honour," he exclaimed, "an' hasn't the auld woman put in the wrong birrd. Sure an that's the heron I was afther shooting for stalin' the trouteens."

But I never heard any more of the "prize turkey." I was never even asked to settle the claim for the dead "hineen !"

Most of my life in Ireland, years before the rebellions, was shadowed by a knowledge of impending horror and tragedy. It came to me when I looked in the crystal for that large-hearted, courageous woman, Mrs. Lindsay, whose martyrdom years later for her loyalty horrified the world ; it came to me on the countless occasions when I looked in its depths in the houses of friends, and saw only blackness and ruin.

Always, like a cloud of foreboding, would come the shadow of approaching horror and the treachery of those who were plotting with Germany to betray the Empire.

I felt the menace of the future when I danced with Prince Louis of Battenberg, Admiral Jellicoe or Admiral Beatty, at Admiralty House, or played croquet with Sir Alfred Paget and his pretty wife, or admired one of Sir Charles Coke's salmon trophies. When I organized theatricals for the Countess of Aberdeen, I saw in fancy, even while I played before a large audience, the vision of what was to come. I sensed it when I would be listening to one of Sir Thomas Lipton's yachting yarns.

Few of those whom I told of these forewarnings found it possible to believe in them ; but amongst

those who placed implicit faith in what I said was Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Wood, who years afterwards said to me, "Everything that you foretold seven years ago has come true to the very letter." And just before he sailed on his last voyage, Lord Kitchener wrote that, as soon as he returned, he would follow up something of importance which I had been able, by the aid of the crystal, to tell him.

Once in the south of Ireland, by a mere chance I read the crystal for a man I met at a country hotel. He said he had heard of me, and asked me to look into the ball for him. I did so, and then I looked at him and said, "But you are an anarchist! Why are you here? You cannot get any disciples in places like this?"

He frowned, and for an instant remained silent. Then he glared at my crystal.

"You have power," he said grudgingly, "and you are right, for I am an anarchist and I am proud of it; but you are wrong when you say I shall get no disciples here. I have found a wonderful harvest here. They are just ripe and ready for my message."

And during the years of rebellion and murder I knew he had been right.

In 1916, when men were wanted so badly to help our gallant "contemptibles," I wrote and produced in the interests of recruiting a three-act play, entitled "An Irish Lead," of which Their Majesties the King and Queen graciously accepted copies, and in connection with which Sir Evelyn Wood, to whom it was dedicated, wrote, "I shall be glad to have such a patriotic clever play associated with the name of Evelyn Wood"; while from H.M.S. *Iron Duke*, Lord Jellicoe sent the message: "I wish you all success with it in the future."

Amongst other warm good wishes for the success of the play were those of that great Irish leader, Lord Carson.

The story was that of an Irish girl engaged to a young farmer, who, during the South African War, was man enough to enlist. In consequence of this act, his promised wife, with all her people and neighbours, revile him, and he is driven from them an outcast in uniform. Years afterwards the heroine is a Superior in a convent in Belgium. All the community have fled as the Germans are marching on the town. Only the Superior remains beside two bedridden nuns and the old chaplain. On the arrival of the Germans the officer insults the priest and tries to make love to the Superior. He shoots the old chaplain when he endeavours to save the nun. At the sound of firing, announcing the unexpected arrival of the British, the German, believing the nun to be a spy, shoots her in cold blood, just as a sergeant, followed by his men, dashes in. As the sergeant raises her in his arms, the nun recognizes him as the man she had so wronged, but always cared for, years ago. She dies in his arms after having craved his forgiveness, and entrusts to him her dying message to the young men of her country—"Come out quickly, and help."

That appeal, which I uttered from the stages of theatres throughout Ireland, was answered by many who made their way to the recruiting office. General Sir John Maxwell, commanding in Ireland, wrote from Headquarters, Dublin: "I think it will be a valuable aid to recruiting, and I congratulate you on having written such a powerful production."

General Stafford, General Headquarters, South Irish

Coast Defence, wrote : " I think your play should be of great national value, in bringing forcibly to the notice of the ignorant and unthinking portion of the community, the sort of treatment that might be expected if Germany, throughout the United Kingdom, should prove to be victorious. I am sure that the play should help to stiffen the resolve of all, to do their utmost to bring the war to a conclusion in favour of the Allies."

It was wonderfully pleasing to receive from Colonel C. C. East, M.V.O., commanding No. 12 District, the following statement : "*Headquarters, Cork.* Following the production of your most realistic recruiting play, 'An Irish Lead,' the number of recruits obtained in Cork area has been practically doubled. After this splendid result, I think it would be desirable if 'An Irish Lead' could be produced in every town in Ireland, as I feel certain it would give similar good results."

For six months I toured with the play, taking the part of the heroine, and, wherever I went, officers commanding in the neighbouring districts gave me every assistance, lending men and bands for the production. All funds from the play were given to the British Red Cross and British Prisoners of War Funds. Then came the memorable day when rebels, amid shouts of "Up the Kaiser," stopped the performance in a Cork theatre, but the scenes which followed have been too vividly reported in the press and too thoroughly discussed in Parliament to need repetition here. From all parts of the world I received messages of sympathy and indignation. But the incident had not come to me as any shock. I had expected all that had taken place.

Soon afterwards I left Ireland for good, to England my old loves, the stage and the film environments offered me ample scope for the development, study and practice of my psychic gifts.

In connection with the stage, a strange incident happened when I was playing in an origin sketch called "The Disc," at Deal.

The sketch had a strong war interest dealing with the love of a wounded English officer for the matron of the hospital where he is lying. He discovers, however, that she has been the wife of one of the enemy, German having been married years previously to a tax of the officer, whom she has long since left. The climaxes the sketch is reached when a German aeroplane bomber hospital, and, being brought down, the dead commander that she is carried into the ward, revealing to the matron man, the is a widow and free to marry her own countryman she loves.

The sketch had been received most enthusiastically and on the second night the call boy brought me a card and a letter from a stranger, Lt Colonel G——, minutes who begged that I would see him. A few minutes later, an elderly white haired man, holding himself erect with military stiffness, entered my room and curtly,

"I have heard of your occult powers. He said things, I "and although I am not a believer in these between your feel constrained to come to you, after having seen g" He sketch, to ask you to give me a crystal reading is in the paused and cleared his throat. My only son a slight Flying Corps"

Beneath the brusquerie of his tone I detected a slight missing unsteadiness, and when he added, 'He has been now for weeks," I understood the reason of it.

I told him I would do as he asked, and the next day he came to the house where I was staying.

When I looked into the crystal, depressed with a dread of seeing some sad tragedy, I was puzzled by a blurred mass of mist and clouds which seemed to rise from the crystal itself. For a long time I could see nothing at all. Then slowly and indistinctly appeared the outline of a man's figure and features, which, when I described them to him, the soldier assured me excitedly were those of his son. Later, there formed a vision of a high, desolate-looking tower, and as it faded I saw in a mist a man's white, drawn face.

Again and again the same visions recurred, and I told the man beside me I was certain his son was alive, confined in a tower on some great height.

Months afterwards, Colonel G—— sent me a handkerchief which had been carried by his son years before, and implored me to put it on my crystal and try to ascertain if his son was still alive, as he had failed to obtain any information.

When I placed the handkerchief on the crystal, the picture of the lonely tower and the outline of a white gaunt face formed again. I was convinced that, somewhere on a high mountain, the old man's son still lived.

Many months later, the Colonel came to my house, and, trembling with emotion, asked me to accompany him to a hospital to see his son—a returned prisoner of war. Emaciated, half mad from solitary confinement and torturing ill-treatment, he had lived in a tower on a high mountain, while the world who knew him “missing” mourned him as dead. The crystal vision had been his sorrowing father's one consolation, inspiring him to hope for the reunion which had at last come.

It is strange how vividly sometimes an article placed on the crystal will conjure up a vision for its owner, no matter how far away he or she may be. On the day on which I write this, two letters from Perak, in the Malay States, prove the accuracy of such visions. One was from a lady whose husband had written to me some weeks previously, forwarding a tie which he had been wearing, to be placed on the crystal. I had never seen him, nor heard of him before. He was only one of the thousands who write for advice or help. His wife's letter ran : " Dear Miss Montague,—Having seen the reading of your crystal on behalf of my husband, may I trouble you for one of mine ? I find all you have stated regarding my husband is entirely true and absolutely marvellous."

Enclosed was a letter from her husband : " I must thank you for the letter reading of your crystal on my behalf. Everything you state of the past and present is perfectly true and correct. I was really amazed, and wonder how such a thing can be possible."

By the same post came a letter from Australia, from a lady who had sent me a lace *jabot* to place on the crystal. " You told me," she wrote, " that I would, after all these years, receive a document containing news of my husband's death, from whom, and of whom I have not heard for ten years. You also said the document would come from a hot country. To-day I have received an official document from Southern India, telling me of his death. Until then, I had no idea of his whereabouts, or if he was even alive or dead. It was truly amazing that this was revealed in the crystal."

A witch-bowl also gives astonishingly successful results from similar objects, and I often place letters or

other things upon the large black witch-bowl in my possession, which has been handed down from the far past as an heirloom to those possessed of second sight. It has been in use for centuries, and has been filled with all manner of different kinds of fluids, besides the water or ink of the more ordinary methods.

Once, when it was filled with water, specially taken from the sacred Ganges, I saw a strange vision for an Indian potentate; while in water from the Liffey I saw, to my horror, a ghastly picture of murder, which foretold the pitiless slaughter of heroic English soldiers in the appalling massacre of Macroom.

On another occasion recently, when the bowl was filled to the brim with ink, I read the destiny of a crowned head of Europe.

It is a strange fact, but both I and other psychics can *feel* a weird influence emanating from the great bowl which has been handled by accredited witch owners, even as I am conscious of an indescribable power when I wear, as I always do, a large white sapphire ring, once the property of an Indian Prince, to whom it had been given by a powerful, holy fakir, with the injunction that none but those possessing second sight must ever wear it. The ring was at first given, under strange circumstances, to a woman who, from being fabulously rich and prosperous, immediately found herself dogged with such misfortune that she returned the sacred gem as a thing accursed. Ever since it came into my hands I have worn it, happy in the knowledge that the fakir's stern injunction has not, in my case, been violated.

Through a visit from a naval officer one afternoon, who came to ask me to read the crystal for him, I after-

wards became the possessor of a second old witch-bowl, which from its history and strange and weird associations, is priceless.

Throughout the centuries, it had been handed down from one accredited sorceress to another, until it came to the hands of an old woman, living in a tumble-down hut in a desolate spot in Cornwall.

From her childhood, she had been regarded by her neighbours as uncanny. Loving to ramble alone at night in the teeth of a gale, with the roar of the incoming sea in her ears, she was believed to commune, on those occasions, with unseen spirits around her.

One night, when a fearful storm was raging, she crept out of her hut and made her way down to the familiar cliffs, for, though old and feeble, she could not resist the call of the thundering surf. But the vitality of years past, when she had climbed like a wild goat up the narrow precipice path, had fled, and, overcome with faintness and weariness, she lost her footing and fell over the side of the cliff, to lie, a crumpled-up heap on a ledge of rock.

There, the naval officer, who came to visit me, saw her, and at the risk of his own life, climbed down the perilous cliff, and carried the old woman to safety. Her gratitude was boundless, and every year he told me he would receive at Christmas-time, a letter from the strange old recluse. One day, when home on leave, a telegram urged him to go at once to the desolate hut in Cornwall. The old witch was dying and implored him to go to her. With the breezy impulsiveness of a sailor, he went, because the pathetic appeal had touched him. Never in his life, he told me, can he forget the scene that he beheld when, after motoring for miles,

was Lady Carisbrooke. Without telling her its history, merely explaining that it was an ancient witch-bowl, I asked her one day to let me read her destiny in it. I asked her to place her hands on it, and when she did so, she exclaimed, that she felt a strange burning sensation, spreading from her finger-tips up her arms. The sensation was so acute, she declared she could scarcely keep her hands upon the bowl. When she withdrew them, and I looked into its depths for her, I was startled by the vividness which came out of what appeared to be thick blue-grey vapour. What I saw, was the prophecy of certain events about to take place in the near future. A few days later, she told me that everything I had seen in the blue witch-bowl had come to pass, down to the minutest detail. Again and again she has tested it, and never once discovered an error in its vivid predictions. Moreover, strange as it may seem, she always testifies to the burning sensation in her hands whenever they come in contact with the bowl. Yet she can hold my crystal without experiencing any similar sensation.

Others besides Lady Carisbrooke since have held the bowl, and have, in many instances, voluntarily testified to a tingling sensation, which increases in strength during their contact with the bowl.

I cannot pretend to explain this phenomenon. It is one of those strange happenings which just exist. And apropos of strange happenings, one of the strangest I have ever experienced followed a visit paid to me about ten months previously by a lady who came to implore my help.

Seventeen years earlier, her husband had left her in Australia, and from that day onward no effort to find him, or to discover if he lived or was dead, had met with

the smallest success. "People assure me he must be dead," she told me, "but I would give anything to find out the truth for certain." She was a nice-looking woman, smartly gowned, and I felt an instinctive sympathy with her, for her story was extraordinarily pathetic. At her request, I gave her my crystal, and when I took it from her, I was conscious of a feeling of amazed incredulity. "Have you really no idea where your husband is?" I asked her. She shook her head. "The last I heard of him was seventeen years ago in Australia," she said. "He disappeared, leaving me a note saying that he was going off to the bush and would never return."

Spellbound I stared at the vision of a man, who in the crystal seemed to almost dog her own footsteps. Beside him was another woman—a woman who wore a wedding ring.

"You are making a mistake if you think your husband is in Australia," I began. She interrupted me quickly, bending towards me. "You mean," she asked, "that he is—dead?" I shook my head. "No," I answered. "He is alive. He is here—quite near you."

"Here?" she echoed incredulously. "In England?"

I peered closer. "He is here—in London."

For a moment she did not speak. Then, recovering a little from her surprise, she made a deprecatory movement. "It is quite impossible," she objected. "If he is alive, he must be somewhere in Australia. I came to you hoping you would give me some clue as to where we could find some trace."

Clearer, clearer, I saw a man's figure—and the other. Could I tell her, I asked myself, *all*?

"Your husband is living here in London—quite near you," I repeated.

"Impossible!"

I felt I must tell her. She had to know.

"He is only a few streets from your own home," I said. "And he is married to another woman."

It was as if a bomb had dropped in the room. My visitor could only stare at me open-eyed and open-mouthed. I heard her breath coming in little gasps. Then she sprang to her feet and faced me.

"You are mistaken," she cried. "The vision in the crystal must reflect some other woman's life—not mine."

I remained, however, unmoved, and her own conviction being shaken, she implored my advice. Together we discussed the matter, and she at length went away to seek the aid of Mr. de Fonblanque, the solicitor who had previously helped to solve an even more difficult case.

I did not hear from her again for ten months. Then, the other day she came, and the moment I saw her, I realized that something stupendous had happened.

Breathlessly she caught my hands in hers.

"You were right!" she cried. "My husband *is* living here—in London—and he married again, five years ago."

Then, as I waited for explanations, she told me how she had followed my advice, and had gone to consult Mr. de Fonblanque, who, after what appeared a hopeless quest and "needle in a haystack" search, discovered her husband living with a woman he had bigamously married.

The strangest part of the story, lay, perhaps, in the fact that he was domiciled not far from where his lawful wife, was staying. How she discovered him, in company

with her successor, would have furnished copy for a dramatic film. As she recounted every detail of the meeting, I realized once more, that truth is indeed far "stranger than fiction."

That also was the verdict of the charming married woman, who one day 'phoned and begged an appointment. She was a friend of people I knew, and after a little conversation, I agreed to see "Mrs. Norton" that day. I am accustomed to surprises and shocks, but I have seldom felt more astounded than I did when I peered into the crystal after my visitor had held it. Somehow, it all seemed so utterly incongruous with her appearance and bearing. She noticed my surprise, although I tried to control any expression of my sentiments.

"Tell me everything you see—*everything*," she said.

I hesitated. Then gradually, I told her I saw she was plunged in trouble—hemmed in on every side by law—nothing but law. I stopped, but she urged me to go on, and reluctantly I was forced to describe what I saw looming ahead. I told her of the menace shadowing a man—her husband. I saw him paying the price of a crime committed, for all around him slanted the sinister gloom of gaol.

Question after question she asked me, and I answered from what, overcome with pity for her, I saw in the crystal depths. Suddenly, she leaned towards me. "I gave you a wrong name," she said. "I was determined you should have no clue——"

She paused, then went on—"It is all so marvellous what you have told me—about 'law—nothing but law.' " She met my eyes and her lips quivered. "I am Mrs. Morton Mandeville. My husband is at present under

arrest with his two brothers. I came to know if he will be found guilty. *You have told me."*

Some weeks after, I read in a newspaper the result of the trial, and knew that the vision in the crystal had been fulfilled.

Crystal-gazing and all other forms of second sight may be employed in the interests of health. It is so easy to ascertain by a vision if the health of the person for whom the vision is obtained needs care. It is simple to find out if anything is organically wrong, or needs surgical or medical treatment. Over and over again, people come to me apparently suffering from overstrained nerves, and there has been mirrored in the witch bowl or crystal, some specific case of mental distress, originating from some unsuspected organic or constitutional trouble, and my urgent advice has sent them to a doctor, and thus enabled them to avoid the menace I have seen threatening their health, and even at times their life.

Clairvoyance does help enormously along these lines, because it reveals so often the need, the urgent need, for medical and surgical skill.

The condition of mental and physical health is always clearly indicated in the crystal, and can be seen from an object which has been in personal contact with the owner, who may be, at the time, thousands of miles away. An example of this happened lately, when Mrs. McAvity, the artist, who was sent over from Canada by the Canadian Government, to paint the Prince of Wales, asked me to put on my crystal a letter from her father, then in Canada, whom she was expecting on a visit to England. In a flash there was revealed the terrible menace that hung over the man's life. I warned my visitor that

he would not cross the ocean to her, and that he was threatened with a terrible internal and unsuspected illness, which would necessitate the best medical and surgical skill procurable, to prolong his life. She was shocked, as she said he was so strong and healthy. A few weeks later she came to me in deep distress, a cablegram in her hand. She had just received the news that her father in Canada was lying between life and death, the victim of an unsuspected internal complaint, and an operation was imminent. Almost daily she came to ask me to see how he was—terrified lest he should succumb. But always I could see his life continuing on through the danger that threatened it—to convalescence.

Mr. Douglas Sladen, the author, once received from a correspondent in Spain, a letter imploring him to send on to me another letter which was enclosed. This was from a lady, who entreated me to place it on the crystal, and see what was wrong with her father's mind. Her dread was, that he was losing his reason. In a moment, after I had lifted the letter from the crystal, I saw a man suffering from an organic disease, of which he was in apparent ignorance. When I wrote urging her to make her father see a specialist for the particular form of disease I had seen, she followed my advice. Later, she wrote and told me that the surgeon had ordered an operation at once to save her father's life.

Until I had written urging him to see a doctor, he had refused, putting down his mysterious loss of energy and vitality to nerves alone, and not to the deadly growth which would have proved his end.

The first time I looked in the crystal for Lady Constance Baird, the well-known yachtswoman, who in 1925 won

forty-nine cups, including that of the King of Spain, with her racing yacht, I saw flashed in its depths her marriage with Lord Charles Kennedy. More than two years before the event, the crystal vividly reflected the wedding, which was arranged so suddenly only last autumn.

Whenever I looked into the crystal, whether I did so in my own house or in her charming Devonshire home, I always saw for the woman who during the days of war followed so intrepidly in the footsteps of Florence Nightingale, the vision of her marriage despite all obstacles. Always distinct and always unvaried, the vision came, throughout the months, with almost monotonous regularity.

Here is another instance of a fortunate event seen in the crystal long before the incident occurred. Vera Pearce, the actress, known as "The Cartwheel Queen of Australia," came to ask me to read the crystal for her, as she was contemplating returning to Australia. I described to her the vision which foretold a sudden engagement in a production which would be an outstanding success. Months later she joined the cast of "No, No, Nanette."

Another vision appeared in the crystal at the same time and reflected the sudden death of her loved sister in Australia. I tried to warn my friend of the impending bad news. Later, when the cablegram containing the sad news of her sister's death lay in her dressing-room, she told me how the crystal warning received months previously had helped her in her crushing sorrow, having broken in some measure the terrible shock.

CHAPTER VI

THE WOMAN IN DRAB

It was once my privilege, in a garrison town of Ireland, to read my crystal for an entire regiment, from the Officer Commanding to the smallest drummer boy. Funds were needed for the Red Cross, and I determined to try and make some money by a method more easily arranged than theatricals or concerts.

For two weeks, evening after evening, the men would patiently "queue up" in the barracks to wait their turn to enter the cosy little room set apart for the séances. One day, when I gazed into the crystal for a good-looking broad-shouldered young fellow who sat beside me, I saw a vision which puzzled me. I saw, quite clearly, the figure of a greyhaired woman dressed in some unfamiliar sort of drab-coloured uniform. Her hands were crossed and she stood staring from a window with a strange expression on her face. It was the expression, I think, that imprinted her on my mind. There was such a world of agonized pathos and longing in the dull grey eyes, which, as I peered into the crystal, met my own.

I described the figure and the man beside me nodded his head. "Yes, that is my mother." Then he paused and his voice shook. "She's been in an asylum these last three years." He averted his eyes that I might not see the pain in them. "She's not really a bad case, Miss," he went on. "She's only . . . strange."

For a moment I did not speak. I could not.

"We're under orders, as you know, Miss, to sail for France. So I have no chance of seeing her to say good-bye." He looked earnestly into my face. "She was a wonderful mother to me——" He clenched his hands, "Oh, if only you could tell me if I shall ever see her again, if it's only to say good-bye."

Right into the heart of the crystal I stared, away from the keen face with the honest, wistful eyes.

"You will see her again," I answered, struggling to keep back the tears.

Two years later in England the remembrance of that soldier and the vision of the poor mother in her drab clothes was recalled to me.

In a ward of a big London hospital, I sat beside the bed of a soldier. He was quite young, and he was dying. He had been carried in from a hospital train only that night, and we knew he had only just lived to see his own country.

He stared past me, as if he saw someone.

"Mother!" The cry was a hoarse whisper. I leaned nearer to take the boy's restless hands, my heart aching for the woman whom he had called, for I too, so recently, had known the agony of loss in the death of my only son, who, though still in his teens, fearless and gallant, had given a wrong age, in his boyish enthusiasm to enlist and "do his bit."

As I looked pitifully upon the pain-racked face it seemed vaguely familiar. "Mother!" His lips moved again. "She told me at Fermoy, I would see you."

Then I knew him.

I saw again a tall khaki-clad lad, sitting at my side in a small room. I recalled the vision of a woman

with dull wistful eyes. I bent closer, but he did not notice, and although, when his eyes met mine he smiled, I knew there was no recognition in their depths.

He saw only a white-veiled nurse, whom he did not realize was anything but a stranger to him.

Forcing back the tears, I stood with my hand on his. He was so soon to pass across the great Threshold——alone.

Suddenly I started violently.

At the outer side of the bed I saw a woman. For a moment I believed one of the scrubbing women had come in, although I knew that at that late hour none but the sisters and nurses were in the silent wards. Dressed in some dark drab uniform she stood, her hands clasped, her colourless face, beneath its white hair, turned towards the lad, who was now moaning a little.

The moaning ceased, and I heard a cry. I turned to see him, his arms outstretched, his eyes ablaze with love and gladness. "Mother!" he cried tremulously. "Oh, Mother, she told me I would see you. *She told me I would see you.*"

Although he had not recognized me, he was echoing my long-remembered words.

I started forward to support him as he jerked slowly back. Alone, I knelt beside the lad, who had answered, smiling, his last call. The old woman had gone.

But I was not the only one who had seen her. The men in the neighbouring beds had noticed the little quiet form and had believed she was one of the outside helpers.

The poor mother with her dull sad eyes and clouded brain had not failed her boy at the last.

I am often asked if I believe in Spiritualism. I can only say that I do believe that between those who love there is at times a bond which enables them to see one another over leagues of intervening space and which death itself cannot sever. I have myself known instances of this. The one which I have just described is one of the most wonderful and, I think, beautiful.

A vision which helped two young people to happiness occurred about this same time. A young girl came to ask my help. She had been engaged to an officer who for months had been missing. Little hope was entertained that he had survived. Everything pointed to his death. The girl told me that her father, who held an important position in the Government, wanted her to accept the suit of another man. But her heart was in France, and she clung to the despairing hope that perhaps her man would at last come back. She begged me to read the crystal for her, and to tell her everything I saw.

"Even if he is dead," she said, "I would rather know."

At first the pictures formed very indistinctly. Then the forms grew clearer and I saw a bearded man, dressed in shabby clothes which hung loosely about his figure. He was sitting before a thatched cottage beneath some tall pine trees.

"Your fiancé," I told the girl, who was eagerly waiting for me to speak, "is not dead. I see him, like someone dazed—stunned, but living."

Bursting into tears, she thanked me, and assured me that nothing now could induce her to give him up. She would wait, no matter how long, if he would only return at last.

Some months later she came again. Official news

of her lover's supposed death had been received. Her people urged her to marry the rich suitor who waited her consent.

She seemed in despair and on the verge of giving in ; but a longing had prompted her to come and ask if I saw in the crystal any corroboration of the sad news.

When I looked into the crystal I saw a very similar picture to the one which I had seen months before : a small thatched house at the foot of pine trees and a gaunt wild-eyed man. Again I assured her that her lover was alive, and that he would come back.

Not long afterwards, her father came to see me, fuming. He said I was the stumbling-block to his daughter accepting her elderly suitor.

He declared that as long as I held out any hope of her fiancé being alive, she would marry no one else. He begged me, when she came again, to refrain from encouraging her. He even suggested it would be better if I told her he was dead. I told him I would not under any circumstances tell her a lie. If I saw in my crystal that her lover was alive, I would tell her so. He left me in a rage, and I did not hear from either him, or her, for a long time.

Then I got a despairing letter from the 'girl. She had given up all hope, she said. She felt she must do as her parents wished. A little later she came to me again. When I looked at the crystal, I saw her lover, but no longer wearing sabots and old clothes. I saw him moving quickly towards her with outstretched hands. I urged her not to marry her other suitor. I assured her that the man she mourned as dead would soon return.

I was going to bed some weeks later when the 'phone rang ; and when I picked up the receiver a girl's excited voice told me that my visions had been confirmed. The missing man had come back. When the girl came to see me, bringing a letter with an official stamp, she was delirious with joy.

The missing officer had been discovered in a humble cottage in a desolate part of France, where an old woman, who had lost her own son in the war, finding him ill and wandering, his memory lost, had taken him in and patiently nursed him back to health.

I had the delight of being present at the wedding. The bridegroom's gift to his radiant bride was a wonderful crystal.

Amongst the celebrated women who have consulted me, Mabel Russell (Mrs. Hilton Philipson, M.P.) is an interesting instance of the prophetic power of crystal-gazing. When she came, it was before she had any idea of going into Parliament. All her ambitions and thoughts were centred round her lovely children. But when I looked into the crystal's depths, I saw a vision of her contesting power and responsibility with others. I saw her, as the scenes passed, standing in a position of power, and knew that she would hold in Parliament the trust of thousands.

I told her she would go into Parliament, and that very soon. She laughed at me, and assured me that nothing was further from her thoughts. Nothing, she declared, would induce her to entertain the idea.

In spite of all her protestations, I repeated that I saw her in Parliament, and on the other side to that represented by her husband.

A year later Mrs. Hilton Philipson headed the poll

in her constituency with a large majority in the Conservative interest.

Afterwards when I lunched with her at the House, and we chatted over the whole strange affair, she told me she had felt impelled to go forward, as I had seen her, into the limelight of public life.

Perhaps one of the strangest and most poignant crystal visions I have ever seen was that in which the late Sir William Barrett, F.R.S., took so much interest, going to the trouble of interviewing witnesses himself, holding a large meeting to testify to the truth of all that had occurred, and reporting it at length in the "Psychic Journal." It at least had the advantage of saving a man's life.

I had run in for a moment to see Mrs. R——, a friend of mine living in South Kensington. She received me with great pleasure as she had been on the point of sending a note to my house to ask me to come and bring my crystal. A friend of hers had just arrived from abroad and wanted me to read it for her.

I told Mrs. R—— that I was in a hurry and would rather read it another time ; but as she insisted, I let her send a servant to my house for the ball.

Then she introduced her friend, Mrs. H——, a pretty, fair-haired Englishwoman. We went into another room alone together, and I gave her the crystal to hold.

When I looked into it, I saw a room, which I described, and in it a tall man, whose description she declared was that of her husband. He seemed to be agitated. He paced up and down the room, then took up the telephone receiver, and, evidently labouring under some great excitement, shouted into it. He did this

three times, and I got the impression that he was calling someone to come at once. When he had finished telephoning, he stood for a moment watching the door. Then he quickly pulled open a drawer in his desk, and took out a revolver. Turning to the door again he pointed the revolver towards it, and thus stood, as if waiting to shoot whoever entered. Presently he shouted once more into the telephone receiver, then again pointed the revolver towards the door. The next instant, to my horror I saw him turn the weapon on himself, deliberately pointing it at his own head. The crystal seemed to swim in blood, and I uttered a stifled exclamation.

A moment later, through the red mist, I saw the figure of a woman, dressed in a lace wrapper, rush in and kneel beside the motionless body of the man. I recognized her as Mrs. H——.

Not knowing what to tell her, I remained silent, and evidently divining that I had seen something which shocked me, she touched my hand. "I am not a bit afraid," she said. "Tell me everything." I shook my head, answering that I could not describe what I had seen.

As she pressed me, however, the conviction came over me that it was only fair to warn her.

I tried to break the truth to her that she would be a widow within a few days—the approximate date I could tell, for so amazingly vivid had the vision been that I had distinctly seen a date on some papers lying on the desk.

Mrs. H—— laughed at my words. Her husband, she declared, was in perfect health and spirits, and had no worries or business troubles. She was lunching with him that day.

Nevertheless, I urged her to keep him under observation during the next few days. I was quite convinced that a terrible tragedy was impending.

Two days later, Mr. R——, the husband of my friend called on me with a note from his wife. He was in a great hurry, and would not wait for an answer to the note. "The husband of Mrs. H——," he explained "for whom you read the crystal two days ago, has been 'phoning frantically for me to go to him at once. He is evidently off somewhere, and wants to take me with him."

With an earnestness that astonished him, I urged him not to go to the house, telling him that danger threatened him if he did. He stared at me incredulously, and when I went on to say that he might lose his life if he went, as his friend would shoot him, he laughed outright. "H—— has been my pal for years," he exclaimed. "He is one of the best, and we've never had a quarrel." As he spoke, he hurried to the door, exclaiming that he must go at once.

Convinced that tragedy lay ahead, I sprang between him and the door, imploring him not to go, and when I saw he would not listen, urging him at least to ring up his friend and ask the name of the place to which he wished Mr. R—— to accompany him.

Very unwillingly he took up my receiver. After some delay the exchange said there was no reply.

Obviously annoyed at having been detained to no purpose, Mr. R—— made once more for the door. "I shall take a taxi," he exclaimed. "I didn't mean to stay at all."

Soon after he had gone I went out to call on a prominent Harley Street doctor, leaving the 'phone number in

case any urgent message should come for me. I had not been in the doctor's house half an hour before I was informed that I was wanted on the 'phone. When I picked up the receiver, a voice I hardly recognized as that of Mr. R—— spoke. In tremulous accents he told me he had been just a moment too late. When he had rung the bell, his friend's native servant had opened it, exclaiming, "I am glad you have come, for the Master has been 'phoning and 'phoning for you——" He had been interrupted by the sound of a revolver shot echoing through the house. They found Mr. H—— lying in his study, a revolver in his hand, and beside him in a loose wrapper, just as I had seen her in the crystal, knelt his wife.

There had been no motive for the suicide. The theory accepted at the inquest was that a sudden madness had urged the unhappy man to take his own life, and that some feeling of loneliness had urged him to want to take his friend with him on his journey into the Unknown. A few days after this appalling tragedy, the widow, a pathetic figure in her weeds, came to thank me for the warning I had given her. But for that, she said, the shock would have killed her. Then she told me what I had not known before.

Three years previously her husband had come to ask me to read the crystal for him, and I had told him he was about to take a new house. I had described its exterior, and warned him that if he moved into it he would meet with tragedy.

He had written an account of our interview to his wife, who was abroad. One passage of the letter, which the poor soul now showed me, ran as follows :—
"I went, just for fun, to this famous Clairvoyante, and

she told me not to take the house I have in my mind, as if I do, within three years, I shall meet with appalling tragedy. I am still the more determined to take it, just to show what rot it all is."

"You see," the widow said brokenly, "how terribly true it all has been. We moved into the new house only a month ago !"

CHAPTER VII

AN ECHO OF THE SPHINX

FORTUNATELY my gift of second sight does not bring me in touch with only the sad side of life. It has, on the contrary, been the means of much entertainment, and has shown me much of the funny and lighter side.

Many people seem to believe that because I am clairvoyante, I must also have the marvellous power of arranging their love affairs for them at will, and of endowing them with fascinations which they do not possess.

One day a lady came to consult me, not because she was anxious to ascertain what destiny held for her, but to discover how she could reduce her bust and waist measurements. She was well over forty-nine, robust and florid, with a complexion which suggested a *penchant* for port, and brilliant red hair hinting at an overdose of henna and clashing horribly with her carmine lips. Her ample person was tightly compressed into a royal-blue costume, and she wore a large picture hat of the same hue, with a waving ostrich plume. Her feet and hands were squeezed into shoes and gloves of blue, and she carried a bag and sunshade to match. She certainly took my breath away as she sailed into the room, and amazed my small Indian monkey "Judy," my inseparable companion, who sat perched on the settee beside me.

The new-comer, with much coy wriggling, confessed that she was madly in love with a young Flying Officer,

who, she added, was many years her junior, although in all other respects she was as juvenile as he. The trouble on which she wished to consult me was the strange backwardness of the object of her affections in coming up to scratch and proposing marriage, in spite of the open encouragement which she gave him on every possible occasion. She quite calmly desired me to *will* him to declare his suit, and assured me that in return for my goodwill I should be invited to her wedding, which she had determined should take place at St. Margaret's, Westminster.

Trying not to laugh, I assured her I was quite unable to force unwilling young men to become ardent prospective husbands. But she would take no denial.

"You have that power," she urged. "Even my friend in the Flying Corps believes you must be clever. I am determined he shall marry me," she went on. "I love him, and I will keep him out of mischief in the Army," she simpered. "I shall adore Army life. I always was a girl for men."

A *contretemps* luckily occurred to prevent her from seeing the smile which, despite my efforts, broadened into a laugh, as "Judy" thoroughly intrigued by my amazing visitor, made a desperate effort to become possessed of her blue bag emblazoned with her monogram in glistening imitation sapphires. By the time I had recaptured the bag from my small pet, I had managed to stifle my amusement, and could assure the lady with due gravity that her success in love lay in her own hands, not mine. She was thoroughly disappointed, "We would make a real Anthony and Cleopatra" she sighed. "He is so dark and I am so fair"—she simpered again—"I love and I adore Egypt."

I did not answer. I could not, without betraying my merriment. The lady patted her ample bosom. "You are clever," she said again. "I want you to get a lot of this off, for a girl is always best to be married when she's thin. My ankles, too, can spare a bit, as I shall have to dress extra smart in short dresses when I marry him." I told her that she must really try someone else as I was not a fat reducer. Paying no attention to my protests, she dived into the bag which I had rescued from "Judy" and drew out a photograph of a particularly good-looking young man in his twenties, dressed in uniform.

"Oh, I adore him," she said coyly. "He's a naughty boy to keep me, his Cleo., dangling in suspense."

Effusively she caught my arm. "Dear Miss Montague, *will* that he proposes to me to-night."

I don't know what became of her after I had at last managed to induce her to leave my room, for although, for some time, she used to write me long and passionately worded effusions about her "lover in mid-air," as she called him, she at length abandoned the one-sided correspondence. I saw later, however, an account in the papers of the marriage of the "lover in mid-air" with a beautiful brunette who had not long left the schoolroom. I wondered, as I read it, what the lady in blue thought of the event.

The power which I am supposed to possess as a clairvoyante is sometimes magnified into something of such colossal magnitude as to take away my breath.

An instance of this happened not long ago, when, after some correspondence between a stranger and my secretary, it was arranged that the former was to call on me to ask my advice on an important matter.

When I came into the drawing-room, "Judy" as usual accompanying me, I found a small, neatly-dressed man with an enormous moustache, and wearing an imposing watch chain from which were suspended at least a dozen large and antiquated seals. Bowing repeatedly, he waved a big folio at me.

"You are going to do a wonderful thing," he began in cockney-of-cockney accents. "'Ere in this case lies papers which are going to thrill you with the tale (he pronounced it "tyle") of a 'orrible wrong what was done to my h'ancesters. 'Ere before you, you see the rightful heir to wealth and the title of the Marquis of W——. I ham the old man's son, born in wedlock, but smuggled hafter birth to hother harms."

He pointed dramatically to my crystal. "In the crystal you will see my success. You will 'elp me to hestablish my claim, hand I will invite you later to stay (he pronounced it as if it were a dwelling-place of pigs), at my hestate."

After glancing at the printed paper, which set forth one of the most preposterous and barefaced claims I have ever read, I looked into the crystal and assured my caller I saw no reflection of him in the heritage he had spoken of. He left my room visibly disgusted, but not deterred in his determination to step into the shoes of a living Marquis, who according to him had usurped "'is lawful right !"

Over and over again, people write to me, or come to me, to beg my help in tracing fortunes, which they declare should be theirs but for some mischance which happened many centuries ago.

One good lady urged me to look in the crystal and locate exactly some jewels alleged to have been stolen

from Mary, Queen of Scots, and hidden by a waiting-woman, who was my correspondent's ancestress.

On another occasion I received a letter from a lady imploring me to give her an interview on a matter of vital importance. When she came she sat for a moment in silence. Then she said, "I am the victim of wireless. I am the medium through which all the messages come. You must free me, for the noise is awful." She clasped her head. "Can't you hear it? Oh, those wires, those awful wires!" She touched her throat. "They have burned up my beautiful neck——See, it is all stringy——They have turned my hair grey——" Here she tore off her hat and flung it on the ground, and as "Judy" promptly ran away with it, I had to effect its rescue.

"I am the living victim of wireless. You must free me from the powers of the man who used me for it. You must——" She started up and caught my hands. "Fools put me in a lunatic asylum in Canada——I got out and came away here. You must stop this noise. Put your head against mine——" She leant against me. "You will hear the messages——They used me for them."

It was rather alarming and I had the greatest difficulty in inducing her to leave.

Another time I got a shock, when a beautifully-dressed woman sprang out of a motor and rushed into my room, labouring under obvious excitement.

"I have proved my husband is unfaithful," she cried excitedly. "I followed him, and have proof, but I will not let this woman keep him. I did not believe it when I was told, but I have proof," her eyes blazed. "The woman who took him from me shall never tempt

him again. I am on my way to her now——” She paused, and I noticed that her lips quivered. “I want you to look in the crystal for me now, and tell me what you see.”

A moment later, horrified, I glanced from the crystal to meet her eyes.

“You are going to commit a murder !” I exclaimed.

Without a word, she dragged out from her muff a small revolver. “I am going to her flat now,” she said. “I want you to tell me, first, what will happen to my husband—after ?”

I knew that, for the moment at least, the woman before me had lost all reason. Her bosom was heaving, her eyes were dilated, her jewelled fingers fidgeted in a terrifying manner with the thing she held. I saw that my own position was precarious and tried to calm her.

With a quietness I did not by any means feel, I talked to her, begging her to do nothing rash. She stayed for fully an hour, and at the end of that time, I was thoroughly strung up myself. But as I stood by my window and watched the woman enter her motor, I held in my hand the loaded revolver, and in my ears there echoed her sobbing promise that she would not take the law into her own hands. Instead she went to a solicitor, and a few weeks later Society was startled by the announcement of a sensational divorce between a well-known titled woman and her husband. Only two people ever knew how nearly a tragedy had happened.

One of the most amusing episodes connected with my séances was a visit paid me by a ship’s captain, who had previously written to me from abroad, to make sure of an interview. He was a huge, bearded man of forty-five, with a large voice and amazingly strong hands.

Of the latter characteristic I was made painfully aware, for my fingers ached for some time after his hearty grip

After assuring me that he was deeply interested in my writings, of which he had read many, he shuffled his feet, and took from his pocketbook an accumulation of press cuttings

"I have got all your pictures," he said, "and I've come here to ask you to answer me a question"

I nodded, picking up my crystal, quite ready to look into it on his behalf But to my surprise, he almost snatched it from me

"I don't want the crystal to tell me," he exclaimed gruffly "I want you, the woman, not the seer, to tell me if you would consider marrying me" As I stared at him, open mouthed with astonishment, he went on

"I buried my wife years ago My sons are grown up, and I always did say if I married again, it would be if the fancy took me Well, it took me right enough the moment I first saw in 'The Daily Graphic' the picture of you as 'The Sphinx' "

I have certainly, in my varied career, been in many amazing situations, but I never did feel quite so taken aback in my life This remarkable man of the sea had come optimistically armed with an engagement ring, set with a moonstone, on which the head of the Sphinx, with diamond eyes, was engraved Much as I coveted the ring as a curio, I had to forgo its possession on the conditions on which it was offered

The last time I saw Herbert Sidney, F S A, the artist who painted me as "The Sphinx," was in a West End cinema, where we sat together to see a film showing himself and me in his studio, and the picture in progress, he was still laughing over the spell working effect of the painting on the bearded sailor

The artist's own death is inseparably connected in my mind with the uncanny dread I always feel when I see any heathen idol, which has been worshipped upon a shrine, used as an ornament or curio. The first time I visited Mr. Sidney's studio was in response to his invitation to bring my crystal there, as he was anxious to know how I should be affected by the atmosphere of the room.

As I looked delightedly round the beautiful studio with its collection of pictures and treasures, I felt a strange and inexplicable sense of foreboding and ill. I became horribly conscious of it as I stood before the painter's masterpiece, "The Spartan Mothers," which by the late King Edward's command had been taken to Buckingham Palace.

Mr. Sidney looked at me keenly.

"Tell me exactly the impression the place gives you," he said. I hesitated, and then said that I loved the studio but that there seemed to be some sinister shadow over it.

I noticed that for the moment he looked startled. Then he laughed, and told me that the only thing which could account for that impression must be the Indian idol which had been stolen from a shrine and given to him.

As he spoke, he opened the gilt door of a beautifully carved Pagoda, and I saw an image whose slit eyes seemed to glitter malevolently.

I begged him to return the idol to the donor, that it might be sent back to its own country and to the temple from which it had been stolen. He shook his head, smilingly assuring me that it was too much of a curio and treasure. I felt so seriously on the matter,

and the presentiment of coming ill grew so much stronger, that again and again I entreated him to send it away. At length he half promised and when I next went to the studio he opened the little pagoda doors and showed me that the idol had gone. But I knew instinctively that he had only hidden it somewhere, for the strange sensation of foreboding still hung over the room. I always felt it when I posed for my picture, but whenever I broached the subject, the artist would laugh and assure me it had gone.

After my visit to the cinema with Mr. Sidney, I left town for a week. On my return, learning that, a couple of days before, he had asked for me on the telephone, I rang him up.

The friend who shared his house answered the call, but I hardly recognized his voice. Then I nearly dropped the receiver. Impossible—impossible. Herbert Sidney was no more. He had been found lying dead in his beloved studio.

My thoughts flew to the idol, which I subsequently ascertained had never left the room.

The sudden death of the artist was followed by another tragedy. The friend who had shared his house collapsed from grief and shock. He, too, was found lying lifeless.

And there in the silent studio stood the stolen idol, laden with the curses of those from which it had been snatched by impious hands.

Of course, what happened may have been coincidence, but I have seen many such coincidences, and although I am not at all superstitious generally, I studiously avoid interfering, in any way whatever, with the images of the gods of any faith.

CHAPTER VIII

AN OFFICER'S FREEDOM

To me, one of the most fascinating aspects of crystal vision is the clearness with which the character of the person for whom I am reading it is betrayed. Sometimes the amazing dissimilarity of appearance and reality seems impossible, but I always know the reflection in the crystal cannot be doubted.

The astonishing differences in the very colour of the crystal is in itself an engrossing study, as the influence for good or evil of the person reflected, irradiates or shadows it.

One of the most striking instances which I remember was when, in France, it was my privilege and honour to see the reflection of the late King Edward. It was long ago, but to this day I can see the clearness of the crystal, devoid of any dark shadow of ill, which impressed me at the time with the amazing power for good and noble self-sacrifice of the "Great Peacemaker." Good influences seemed to radiate from him, and in few lives have I ever seen such an utter absence of self.

Another whose crystal showed an amazing readiness at whatever personal sacrifice, to benefit the helpless creatures who cannot plead for their own cause, was the Duchess of Hamilton. In it I saw her patiently, tirelessly, surmounting obstacle after obstacle, to achieve her aim—the amelioration of the sufferings of dumb animals.

Those who understand second sight in any form well know the effect of these visions on the reader. They seem to re-establish one's faith in one's own kind, however terribly it may have been shaken by some awful reflection of vice or infamy.

Yet another whose untiring devotion was imprinted on my mind was the late Admiral Cradock, who, before he went out on his last fatal action, knew that it meant his end.

Coming in from hunting, on the last day of his leave, when he had ridden my big roan hunter "Sahib," he asked me laughingly to look into the crystal to see if he was going to have good hunting luck on his leave next year.

Instead of any vision of him on horseback in his well-fitting pink coat, I saw a picture which returned to my mind when the news of his tragic loss came to England. I saw him standing in an atmosphere of death, his hand raised as if at the salute, while he encouraged the men around him.

I think one of the most surprising and interesting of my crystal visions occurred not long ago, when I received an officer, late of the Buffs, at my house.

He was a strikingly big handsome man of about thirty-three, who had distinguished himself in the War and been badly wounded.

He did not say anything about himself, except that he was anxious for my advice, but the moment I looked into the crystal I realized that he was in terrible trouble ; that he was, in fact, contemplating taking his own life. The cause of his trouble was the conduct of his wife, a young widow whom he had married before the end of the war. From their wedding day she had done her

best to break his heart by her callous indifference to himself, her flirtations with other men, and her reckless extravagance. Generous, big-hearted and sensitive, he had for a time been an easy prey to her pitiless unscrupulousness, but now, harassed by her debts and goaded by her treatment, he was almost in despair.

I knew from what I saw that it would take very little more to drive him to suicide, as the only way out. He could not get the evidence necessary for a divorce. His wife was far too cautious and astute.

He seemed so wretched and hopeless that I determined to help him if I could, and I made him promise he would do nothing desperate until I had seen him again.

Then I told him that I saw the reflection in the crystal of the woman he called his wife, but I added, "You will be freed from her before Christmas, although it will not be by death or divorce."

As he uttered an exclamation, I peered closer. "She is not really your wife," I added slowly.

Incredulous, and not understanding, he stared at me. "I married her seven years ago in a church. Her husband was drowned five years previously. My people were at the wedding." He sighed. "I don't see any possibility of being free by Christmas. She is too clever to give me the chance to divorce her."

I still stared at the crystal. "She is not your wife," I said, mystified by the vision of an old grey-haired man who stood between the figure of the officer and the girl. There was obviously some queer complication. But I knew that it could be unravelled, and that he would be free.

A few weeks later, Captain J—— came to see me again. He was even more wretched than on his first

visit. He had had a terrible quarrel with his wife, who had plunged him still further into debt, and he told me desperately that he should make an end of it all. Life held nothing for him while he was tied to such a woman.

I was really frightened. I knew from the crystal that sorrow was undermining his powers of endurance. He could not go on much longer. Looking into the crystal, I again saw the old man standing between Captain J—— and his wife; and I begged him to try to get legal help. He said that he had tried and failed. No solicitor had been able to prove anything against his wife's moral conduct. I advised him to go to a solicitor of my acquaintance, Mr. de Fonblanque, whose shrewd, almost uncanny insight I had myself had reason to admire. Rather helplessly, he demurred, insisting that he had no information to give him on which he could work, but I urged him so strongly that he ultimately followed my advice.

When Mr. de Fonblanque 'phoned me to say that he regretted he did not see what he could do, I told him I was certain that Captain J——'s wife was not legally his wife, and begged him to do all he could, as I was sure that if anyone could succeed, he would. Rather unwillingly, he undertook to make inquiries, and embarked on what most people would have considered a hopeless quest.

A month had passed when one morning, my page boy came to tell me that Captain J—— was downstairs and had said that he must see me at once.

A few minutes later, a man I hardly recognized rushed into the room, his face absolutely alight with excitement. "You were right," he panted, "absolutely right. Mr.

de Fonblanque has found out everything. I am free, as you said I would be. She was never my wife. It was a bigamous marriage . . .” His breath came in gasps. “She has an old husband living.”

When he had got his breath, he sat down and told me the story of how Mr. de Fonblanque, with nothing to go on, had started spiritedly to make exhaustive inquiries into the former life of the girl whom Captain J—— had married ; and how he had ultimately discovered the astounding truth. She had never been a widow. Her husband, an old man, had never been drowned, but still lived in a remote country district. A visit to him in his own house elicited the information that she had run away from him some years previously, leaving no clue to her destination ; but as she had made his life a hell with her temper and her extravagance, he had not attempted to trace her. When, however, he learned that she was blasting the happiness of a gallant young officer even as she had blasted his own, he at once came to London and furnished all the evidence required to annul his wife’s secret and bigamous second marriage.

So it was, after all, a wonderful Christmas for Captain J——, as, radiant and hopeful, he responded to the toasts of his friends for his future happiness.

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A vision which reflected an amazing glitter of gold, appeared in my crystal when Miss Sheila Brunner came one day to consult me. To her evident surprise, I informed her she would be married shortly to a man whom I described as a foreigner of rank in his own country, and I went on to tell her of a wonderful picture in which she, as the principal figure, stood dressed in

shimmering gilt, a veil of gold shading her fair hair ; while grouped round her were others, also clad in golden sheen. It was an unusual reflection of a future wedding : even the crystal itself seemed tinted with gold.

A few weeks later I received an invitation to the wedding of Miss Sheila Brunner with Prince Ferdinand Andreas de Liechtenstein, which in the newspaper accounts was described as the "Golden Wedding." The bride and bridesmaids were dressed in glittering gold. Gold seemed everywhere.

At the reception at Claridge's the bride's mother exclaimed before all the assembled guests as she welcomed me, "It is all too wonderful. You foretold everything." And standing beside her bridegroom, the newly made Princess echoed her words. As the incident was repeated in several papers, I received a deluge of letters from would-be brides, asking me to try to see nuptial visions for them also. One lady from South Africa wrote pathetically that she had already been married three times. Her first husband she had divorced ; influenza had accounted for her second ; and her third had deserted her. "I always dream I see myself a bride all in white," she wrote, "with a crown of water-lilies. Do you think this is an omen that I will marry happily for love, the next time ?"

The optimism of some people is really refreshing !

Apropos of South Africa, I received a strange request not long ago from a lady whose husband held an important official position out there. Her letter, which was registered and enclosed a small packet of tissue paper, began with the statement that she was willing to pay me a large sum of money if I would use my psychic powers on her behalf and describe to her the appearance

of the owner of the hairs she enclosed. The said hairs, she explained, she had found on divers occasions upon her husband's coat ! " My own hair " she wrote, " is, as you will see, a rich black. These are fair, apparently from an overdose of peroxide." She went on to explain that she did not wish to employ local detectives in case her husband should find out and be warned. She was certain he was carrying on an intrigue, and believed that, by putting the fair hairs on the crystal, I could discover the identity and whereabouts of the lady in the case. " I want to catch him red-handed when he least expects." In the tissue paper were carefully wrapped a few natural golden hairs, which were certainly in striking contrast to the lock of " rich black," suggestive of insecto, cut from the writer's own head.

I wrote back regretting that I was a crystal-gazer and not a private detective.

CHAPTER IX

A MAHARAJAH'S WIFE

WHEN strangers come to consult me, they frequently prefer to give me any name but their own. They have an idea, I think, that hearing their names may convey something to my mind, which they want to be quite unbiassed. An instance of this was a man who made an appointment with me by letter, giving his name as Mr. Trent.

When he arrived, I knew I had never seen him before. I read the crystal, and told him that his house would shortly be upset : a robbery would occur there and a very valuable jewel would be stolen. I went on to tell him that I saw great troubles and worry over his loss, for the crystal seemed full of legal documents, indicating discussion and quarrelling over a sum of money. The jewel, I knew, would never be recovered. I next described some incidents in "Mr. Trent's" past life, in which he figured as a soldier, wearing the uniforms of two different forces.

He said nothing at all, but, thanking me courteously, went away.

Three days later I was asked on the 'phone to grant "Mr. Trent" an interview at once, and when I consented he came round to my house. He seemed greatly agitated. "You are wonderful!" he exclaimed, the moment he saw me. "You were right when you told me I wear two uniforms. My name is Colonel Penton

Powney, late of the Grenadier Guards. I am also Commandant of Special Constabulary. I gave you a wrong name to test you."

He paced up and down the room.

"Everything you told me has already come to pass. A robbery has been committed in my house, and a ring, a valuable heirloom worth thousands of pounds, has been stolen. After informing Scotland Yard, I have come at once to consult you."

I looked into the crystal. "You will never recover the ring," I told him. "It is out of the country already." I paused and peered closer. "You will have a great deal of trouble to recover the insurance . . . I see Law all round you."

A short time afterwards, Colonel Powney came to tell me that he was in the thick of a lawsuit against the Insurance Company, who were trying to avoid paying for the loss of the ring. I told him he would eventually get the money in full. He did. The day he won his lawsuit, he came again, and asked me to look into the crystal.

When I did so, there came a quick succession of visions, which prophesied that he would soon go abroad in an important official capacity. He shook his head when I told him this, assuring me that he had finished all connection with public work. A few weeks later, most unexpectedly, he was sent in a very influential capacity to France in connection with the Devastated Area Commission.

Only a few weeks ago, he wrote to make an appointment as he said he wished to learn once more what the crystal foretold for him. I saw a puzzling vision of men dragging some leaden figures, apparently at night, and

staggering beneath their weight. The men disappeared into darkness. This was followed by a picture which made me shudder, and I turned to my companion, and described minutely the figure of a man I had seen first, about to drive a motor and then lying lifeless on a country road near an overturned car. My visitor started.

"You have accurately described my friend General W——, to whom I am going to-morrow on a two-days' visit. He is driving me to a political meeting."

I begged him to postpone his visit, saying that if he went he would be killed, even as his friend would. But he would not promise me not to go. He said he could not disappoint his friend.

Then, as if to reassure himself, he asked me to look in the crystal once more.

"If you postpone your visit," I told him, when I had done so, "you will live to receive an honour. If you go, you will be killed."

Nevertheless, he went away still determined to visit his friend. He had given his word to go, and that was sufficient.

But that very night, luckily, an event occurred which made him alter his mind. The beautiful lead cupids, the lead figures of my vision, which were the treasured ornaments of his garden, were stolen from their pedestals. The robbery brought my warning home to him with redoubled force. At the last minute, he wired to cancel his visit.

The following day came the sad news that his friend had been discovered lifeless in a country road beside his overturned car on his way to the meeting. If Colonel Powney had gone as had been arranged, he too, would have met his doom.

But the incident which the Colonel declared before a crowded meeting to be the final proof of the accuracy of my visions was the inclusion of his name in the Birthday Honours List.

People often ask me if I feel my health impaired by the strain of crystal-gazing or any other method of occult vision. It is because I do use a crystal, a mirror, or even sand, that I do not feel any strain. At one time I was in the habit of practising clairvoyance *without* any aids to concentration, and I did feel the consequences very much.

Sometimes at bazaars or charity entertainments I feel a certain strain, for then, in a difficult atmosphere, I have to look into the depths of the crystal for perhaps fifty people, one after the other. But although I myself suffer, the clearness of the vision is not affected.

It was at a bazaar years ago that I read the crystal for Captain Arthur, of "Mr. A" fame, in Limerick, and warned him of trouble ahead, and at a fête I foretold for Mrs. Lloyd George the downfall which lay before her husband. In both cases the visions were as clear as if they had been reflected in the quiet of my own room.

A crystal vision, which, at the time, impressed itself with startling poignancy on my brain, occurred when two little Indian Princesses were visiting England. They had come over to be presented at Court, and to see something of English life. Their husbands, with commendable broad-mindedness, had consented to their abandoning *purdah* during their sojourn. They were both exceptionally beautiful, and had taken London by storm. We became great friends, and they would often run into my house for a chat.

One afternoon, as they sat in my drawing-room, the

page boy announced that His Highness the Maharajah of I—— was downstairs and wished to see me.

Immediately the smiles left the little Princesses' carmined lips, and the laughter fled from their wonderful eyes. Claspings their tiny jewelled fingers, they begged me not to allow him to see them, for fear he should discover they had been smoking. He was their relative, they explained breathlessly, and he was angry they had been permitted to abandon *purdah*. I assured them that he would not come where they were and, leaving them, I went downstairs to the waiting-room.

The Maharajah, an imposing and princely figure in Eastern dress, bowed with stately haughtiness. He wished me, he said, to go to his London house to read the crystal for his wife. I arranged to go the following day.

I am well acquainted with the manner in which Eastern potentates live, and when I entered the house of the Maharajah in Cromwell Road, I could see at once that he was absolute monarch there, and that he had boundless wealth. At every door stood a couple of native sentries, gorgeously uniformed in oriental fashion, and the curtains, rugs and furniture of the house must have cost a fortune.

I was ushered into a room with a great deal of ceremony, and had just taken my seat when a little Indian woman entered. She said she was the Maharajah's wife, and that I was to read the crystal for her. She was dressed in a golden *sari* with a glittering border, but there was nothing very prepossessing in her appearance. In fact, I distrusted and disliked her at first sight. She took the crystal in her hands, frowned as if concentrating on a wish, and handed it back to me.

When I looked into it, I saw her standing in a room furnished in the Indian style, which I had the impression was actually in India. She stood by the head of another woman who was lying on a cushion, sobbing, with her hands over her face.

This second woman looked dreadfully ill, and in the eyes of the Maharajah's wife there was a gloating, triumphant expression, as though some long hoped-for object were being attained. In one hand she held a cup, and into this she was dropping something from a bottle. Her hands seemed to tremble with eagerness.

The Maharajah's wife listened impatiently while I was telling her what I saw. "Oh, yes, I know, I know!" she said. "But is there nothing else?"

"No, I cannot see anything else," I replied, and she frowned with annoyance.

"Why," I asked, "what else did you expect?"

"I wished," she replied, "and I hoped that you would be able to tell me something about what I long for. Tell me," she continued eagerly, "will my enemy be dead soon—shortly, after I go back to India?"

I looked into the crystal again, and saw the same scene. There was no change whatever, but in the light of what she had told me by her question, I understood the meaning of a dark shadow behind her reflected form, and a brightness which seemed to surround the woman on the cushion. The shadow and light I had put down to the thoughts and natures of the two women; but now it was quite clear that the woman on the cushion, evidently the enemy of my client, was going to live, while the latter would die.

"No," I replied, "your enemy will not die yet, not for a long time, not till after you."

I have seldom seen anyone in such a tearing passion as the Maharajah's wife worked herself into at my words. She stamped about the room, glaring at me furiously. But her passion died down as the Maharajah entered the room. She fawned before him with adoring docility.

The Maharajah took me into another room, where, he said, he wished me to read for another. Leaving me there, he sent in to me a slight frail-looking woman, who appeared to be in the early stages of consumption. I have never seen a more hopeless expression than hers, or such suffering as was portrayed by her whole figure.

Her crystal was similarly expressive, for in reading it I had a sense of unspeakable suffering, cruelty and torment, mental and physical. She was more communicative than the other woman, and I learned that she also was the Maharajah's wife but had been deposed because she had had no children. Her supplanter, however, was jealous of her. I guessed that this woman was the enemy of whom the new favourite had spoken, and drew my own conclusions.

When she had withdrawn, the Maharajah returned to me, and, locking the door, said he too wished to have his fortune read. He sat down in a businesslike way, and announced that his desire was to know with whom his deposed wife had been unfaithful to him.

"Her Highness the Maharanee," he said, "tells me that this other has been unfaithful on many occasions. I wish to know with whom."

I am happy to say that, by means of the crystal, I was able to open his eyes to what was passing in his establishment. As a result of what I told him, he brought his two wives into the room. He charged the frail, childlike wife with being unfaithful to him. She denied

it with all the breath in her little body. Turning to the other, who had been looking on with a smile on her face, he said—"And I charge you with attempted murder!"

Her face changed in an instant, and assumed a glowering cunning expression.

"This lady," the Maharajah added, "tells me that in your crystal she saw you trying to poison V——. She gave me such proof, and I believe."

The favourite denied the charge vehemently, but it was evident the Maharajah believed the charge he had made. He said that he had observed his deposed wife become suddenly ill, and fall into a decline, which threatened to end her life very quickly, and that, although he had grown to loathe her, he had had his suspicions.

Months later I received a disjointed letter in very imperfect English. It was from the deposed Ranee. She was well, she was happy, God was very good to her. She was an expectant mother at last. At the foot of the page she had written, and underlined, the announcement that the one-time favourite had died!

There was no further explanation. It was as I had seen. The sickle of the Reaper had fallen upon her rival, and not upon herself.

CHAPTER X

FILMS—AND A FLOOD

WHEN I was acting for the Films, my crystal on several occasions foretold strange events.

My fellow artistes delighted to make me read it for them during those inevitable and interminable "waits," which, like Tennyson's brook "go on for ever"—in "movie" life. I read it for Lady Diana Manners, Sir Simon Stewart, and others of the company, and it never failed to reveal some vivid scene of real life.

Once, at Beaulieu, I had the unique experience of seeing reflected in the crystal an awful impending tragedy, which was afterwards enacted in reality before my very eyes. The irony of the whole affair lay in the fact that as "Rhoda, Queen of the Gipsies" I played a scene in which I was supposed to see depicted in a crystal a fatal flood and danger for the heroine, whose part was played by Flora le Breton.

By the way, the manner in which I managed to get the part, which I was very anxious to play, caused a good deal of amusement.

Mr. Stuart Blackton, the producer, told me quite decidedly that he could not let me play "Rhoda," as in the latter part of the film the Gipsy Queen had to appear as an old woman "wrinkled as a crab-apple," and he was sure I could not manage the make-up. He had cast me for a smart, attractive and dashing peeress.

This may have been more elegant, but it was a minor

part compared with the other, and my heart hankered after the wrinkled old gipsy. So the moment I got home, I ransacked my make-up box, procured some antiquated garments, and borrowed a terrible pair of old felt slippers from my soldier servant. Then I rang up Lady Moss and asked her if she would meet me in front of the Achilles Statue in Hyde Park on the following morning at eleven. "Seeing's believing," and I knew that if Mr. Blackton saw me with wrinkles, he would withdraw his objections.

Next morning I shuffled out, clad in an old shawl, a patched skirt, a handkerchief tied over my unkempt "grey" locks, and the borrowed slippers. My face was furrowed and wrinkled by an ingenious trick I had learnt from Sarah Bernhardt, and I looked like an ancient dame who had celebrated her hundredth anniversary. Under my arm I carried "Judy," and in one hand some sprigs of white heather for sale.

In the Tube people stared. One lady actually moved away from my proximity, muttering to her companion something about a "dirty old gipsy." Another in the lift was more sympathetic. She turned smiling to the man beside her. "Poor old woman, how she loves her pet," she exclaimed, and handed me a shilling to "buy some fruit for your monkey."

The policeman at Hyde Park Corner held up the traffic. He saw a bent old brownfaced gipsy shuffle in apparent terror across the road. In the Park itself, a small crowd followed me, and I heard a man exclaim to his companion, "She is the first genuine gipsy I have seen for years!" Beside the Achilles Statue, a smart motor stopped, and Lady Moss the last syllable in *chic* and charm, stepped out to look round for me.

She watched the old bent woman with some amusement. Then she saw "Judy" !

Holding out my flowers I moved towards her. "Pretty lady—buy a piece of heather for luck from the old gipsy." She stared at me with a puzzled expression. My request that she would meet me had already rather mystified her.

Some men stepped forward—a couple of cameras were lifted. There was the sound of a few sharp clicks, and I knew the deed was done !

After explaining the stunt in a hurried undertone to Lady Moss, who narrowly escaped betraying me by laughing, I slipped away, the centre of all eyes. Several people stopped me to give me coppers.

When I was near my own house, one of the felt slippers fell off. In stooping to replace it, I cannoned violently against an immaculately dressed gentleman. He uttered an expression of annoyance. Looking up, I was startled to recognize in the spick and span pedestrian with whom I had collided none other than my own landlord, Mr. Lewis Peters, a well-known and highly influential and respected member of the Wool Exchange.

Even now I sometimes chuckle to recall the look of consternation on his face, when, stretching out a wrinkled grimy hand, I called him by his name. Consternation deepened into horrified incredulity, when, as a crowd began to collect, I smiled sweetly, to display my "blackened front teeth," and invited him to come back with me to lunch ! He did not accept. . . . He did not refuse. Without a word he wheeled round sharply . . . and fled !

On the following morning some of the illustrated dailies had snapshots of a gipsy in Hyde Park ; while,

the "Daily Graphic," beneath a picture of Lady Moss buying heather from an old shawl-draped woman, printed an explanation that the latter was Miss St. John Montague, testing the realistic powers of her latest make-up !

When the paper, of which a copy had been placed on Mr. Blackton's desk, caught his eye, he rang me up to go at once and see Mr. Clarkson about my costumes for the part of "Rhoda" the gipsy.

But this is a digression, and I must return to the story which I set out to relate.

In my room at Beaulieu sat Flora, a dainty figure, waiting for her call.

"Look in the crystal, Nell, there's a darling," she coaxed. "I have ten minutes yet."

I told her to hold it first. Then I looked into it and was appalled to see what seemed to be a raging torrent, in which a little figure was being dragged down—down beneath the foaming tide. It was Flora.

"Nell ! What's wrong ?" she asked, frightened by the expression in my eyes.

I did not speak, for before me the scene was changing, and I saw other figures in the raging water. Then I saw it chasing over a small white face framed in wonderful long hair. Putting the crystal down, I warned her that she must be careful, very careful. I had seen danger to her, terrible danger, in a sweeping flood. She smiled and nodded her head.

"It's lucky Georges can swim so well," she exclaimed. "I shall tell him to be careful in our water scene to-day."

A few moments later, in answer to her call, she tripped away to the river, near the gates of Lord Montagu's ancient seat, Palace House, once an old-time monastery.

Nothing happened that day, nor for several days after. The making of the picture went on happily. Then one morning Georges Carpentier, who was playing the lead, came into the Inn, his feet and legs dripping

"Rhoda ! " As usual he called me by my film name " It is just too awful Look at my silk stockings . . . and it is impossible to get more before to-morrow . . . "

As he spoke he pointed to his legs, round which his stockings, torn to shreds, hung in ribbons

" Can't you lend me a pair ? " he asked. " I promise I will be, oh, so careful. "

I laughed ; I knew Georges and his " careful " ; but I ran up to my room to get him what he asked When I returned someone told me he had been called back in a great hurry to the river, as Mr. Blackton was taking the coach scene sooner than had been expected Thinking Georges might want the stockings I followed him to where they were " taking. "

The river bank was crowded with the spectators who had come from the country round to see the river scene The river had been run almost dry by shutting down the sluices In the middle of the stream stood a carriage without wheels, and beside it was a postillion riding two horses In the carriage were Flora le Breton and Mary Clare

The " Commodore, " as Mr Blackton was called, waved his megaphone to some men standing beside the sluices on the far side of the road It was the signal to open them, and in a moment there was a roaring sound as of thunder The river rushed down with tumultuous force By mistake too many sluices had been opened The horses, seeing the water rising, plunged and reared in terror Stuart Blackton shouted

to the men to close some of the sluices, but it was impossible to hear his voice above the roaring of the water.

My limbs trembled under me. I stared fascinated at the loaded carriage, against one window of which a little white face was pressed, while through the other Mary Clare stretched her arms despairingly.

Still rose the water, and a cry of horror broke from the throats of all who watched. It was no make-belief drowning for a film, but stern reality. My crystal vision was being enacted before my eyes.

Like a helpless thing Carpentier, strong swimmer though he was, was hurled far from the wheelless coach.

Women wept, and men clenched their hands.

Through the open window of the nearly submerged coach, the water poured. Men on horseback plunged into the flood, in desperate endeavour to save the two girls.

Just as I felt a fearful faintness coming over me, a swimmer climbed upon the coach and, smashing the woodwork, managed to drag out one actress, and then the other.

White and unconscious, Flora was carried towards me. A doctor hurried to her side.

"Touch and go," he said later, as I leant over her bed. "I never want to see such a close shave again as long as I live."

Still white and exhausted from her terrible experience, Flora clung to me. "The crystal was right, Nell," she whispered.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten day, with Georges shivering from exposure and shock, wrapped in hot

blankets, and sipping punch, and Mary Clare and Flora both suffering from collapse.

Lord Montagu had been to the very fore in the rescue work, while nothing could exceed the kind thoughtfulness of his pretty young wife in offering us every possible help.

"We won't have any more drownings in this picture," Mr. Blackton said to me the following morning, when, with my screen husband, William Luff, the King of the Gipsies, I stood waiting my turn to be washed away to a watery grave, clutching a birdcage and two lovebirds in my hands.

"I'm going to give you both another *finale*," he went on. "We'll blow you up instead!"

So the top of a ditch, gunpowder and dynamite, accounted for my end!

Soon after this thrilling climax to the making of "The Gipsy Cavalier," I found myself once more in that most delightful of spots, Beaulieu, where Mr. Blackton had rented Palace House and its demesne for the setting of "The Virgin Queen." As there was no part suitable for me, I had agreed to help Mrs. Blackton with the management of the company, and it was a cheery family party, as my elder girl, Marcella, was playing, with Marion Blackton, the part of one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, and "Bunty," my youngest, aged ten, was squeezed into the green and gold livery of the tiny page, who, whenever possible, got into mischief behind the Royal Back.

The inn was full to overflowing. Some of us stayed there and some at the Palace, but, when the whole company had arrived, many of the artistes had to be billeted in farm-houses in the neighbourhood, while several of

the county people charmingly offered hospitality to others.

I often used to wonder as I stood in the oldest parts of Palace House, which had been a portion of the ancient monastery, what the monks would have thought if they could have seen the invasion of their precincts. There, in the old cloisters, was Lady Diana Manners, laughing with Mary, Queen of Scots, whose head had just been "chopped off" before the camera, and smoking cigarettes with Sir Francis Lakin, who, until the producer pulled him up, was ready to be screened with his Lord Darnley ruff hopelessly awry, and his trunks askew. There, arguing over some card trick, two amazing dwarfs kept up a rapid discussion, while avoiding the irritated onslaughts of a sailor's monkey which dragged at its chain in its efforts to spring at a large cockatoo, borrowed from a livestock establishment in London. There, in the once austere dormitory, laughing, chattering girls in many stages of deshabille, painted and powdered their faces, while in the refectory crowds of strangely garbed men in old-time uniforms, armour or rich court dress discussed the racing news, over pots of beer ! Truly a motley gathering to find in that cloistered retreat !

The charming and hospitable rector of Beaulieu, Mr. Powles, who took a great interest in all our doings, told me that he himself had seen and spoken with the ghosts of monks who had lived in the ancient monastery. I have stood in the ruins on a moonlight night, and I have never known anything so eerie as that silent spot, where in grim solitude men had worked through the ages to "make their souls." Once I sat alone in a portion of the ancient abbey, after the artistes had all gone

to supper and silence reigned, to peer into my crystal to see what would come into its depths.

For a long time I looked in vain. But presently I saw a dim figure crouching beside a half-open iron-studded door. It was that of a woman, dressed in a fashion of long ago. She cowered down, her face hidden in her hands. As I watched, the door slowly closed, and it seemed as though the woman's despair increased, for she struck the door with her hands. Then the dim vision faded.

What it meant, I do not know. It may have been the reflection of some woman's sorrow, because a lover had turned his back upon her and the world, to enter those heavily barred doors. I never knew, and I did not try my crystal in that spot again. The eeriness of the place—alone there, at night—deterred me. I was haunted by the rector's assurance that he had seen and spoken with the monks who had passed.

Another strange vision which I had while at Beaulieu made a deep impression upon me, as it had such a remarkable sequel. A man who was staying in the neighbourhood, asked me to read the crystal for him, and when I did so, I saw a picture of a small thin-faced woman, apparently pretty, standing beside him and evidently upbraiding him.

Other scenes followed quickly, from which I gathered that the man before me was married to a woman who, exigent of his attention and his money, was systematically deceiving him. I saw her distinctly in the arms of her lover.

It was an awkward position for me to be in. I realized how unhappy the man was, how miserable and hunted his life was made by the woman whom he felt it his

duty, because of his rather weak, generous nature, to pardon.

I saw that divorce would give him happiness. It would leave her free to marry his rival, whom, however, since he had little means, she preferred to love in secret, supporting him with her husband's money.

When I told the husband that I saw—divorce, freedom and happiness—he was dumbfounded.

“It is all impossible,” he exclaimed, and there was a note of bitterness in his voice. “My wife will never give me cause to divorce her. She would not divorce me, no matter what cause I gave her. It is unthinkable.”

I looked at him keenly.

“Would not freedom mean happiness to you?” I asked him.

He did not answer.

I discovered that he had had to sell his yacht to pay what he believed were his wife's debts, although in reality the money had gone into his rival's pocket.

He told me that as his wife had suggested his taking a change, he was going for a trip alone, for the first time since his marriage.

The crystal showed me exactly what was in store for him, but I did not say anything further, except that he would shortly figure in the Law Courts and that his marriage would come to an abrupt end.

After I had left Beaulieu, he came to see me.

“You are uncanny,” he exclaimed, as he shook hands. “I had to come back unexpectedly on a business matter that my wife knew nothing about. I went home without wiring, meaning to surprise her.” His face stiffened. “I did surprise her—and her lover——”

Shortly afterwards I read in the morning paper a case

which amazed all who knew the woman, who to all appearances had only one fault, that of being a too devoted and exacting wife.

There were no more distressing cases of genuine tragedy taking the place of faked during our stay at Beaulieu. We had a big fire, from the flames of which Lady Diana Manners was rescued at much apparent peril, and her maids of honour escaped down blazing staircases, while the onlookers coughed and choked in the smoke. But it all went off without mishap, and the doctor waiting with rolls of bandages was, after all, one of the unemployed.

Several county ladies had "walking-on" parts, dressed in marvellous garments representative of ancient splendour; and some of the scenes in the dressing-rooms were worthy of the pencil of George Belcher himself!

Going into one of them, to see if the "crowd ladies" were rightly gowned, wigged and made up, I found one of the latest recruits, whose appearance certainly did not suggest any interest in things theatrical. She looked much more like a "hard-to-hounds" rider, or a militant suffragette of the days when trams and windows were wrecked, and I noticed that her face was as innocent of grease paint as that of a new born babe.

"I suppose you know how to make up?" I asked her. She glared at me.

"Make up," she queried. "What do you mean?"

I held out my box of grease paints and powder.

"You must make up your face," I explained.

She turned on me wrathfully, fairly snorting with indignation.

"Young woman," she exclaimed, "I have never put

powder on my face. I have never made up in my life. My mother never made up. My grandmother never made up. I am as nature made me, and I am not ashamed of it ! ”

I was about to explain the necessity in this case, but she held up her hand.

“ *Make up,* ” she sniffed, “ I leave that to the *young men* of the present day ! ”

So we put her well in the back row, where it did not matter if her face looked a blotchy blur !

A strange incident connected with filming took place when I was acting for the Ideal Film Company in “ Handy Andy. ” A girl came to my dressing-room door, and asked me if I could possibly read the crystal for her. She was a small-part girl, pretty, but wan and apparently ill.

What I saw when I looked into the ball startled me. The girl herself was standing on the edge of a boat, which moved slowly into darkness. In her arms she held a tiny child. That picture faded, and was followed by another, in which in the shadow of a garden gate a baby lay. . . . I distinctly saw the tiny hands clutching the air as if seeking for someone.

When I told the girl what I saw, she grew deathly white, but she did not answer. Feeling sure I was to be the witness of some tragedy, I looked again. Slowly the crystal cleared of deep lurking shadows, and there formed the vision of a man who, helpless and motionless, with a gash across his head, lay propped against the roots of an immense tree. Near him, moved dark-skinned men. Then the outline of the girl formed ; which meant that, ill though he was, his thoughts were with her.

As I described the man, the girl burst into a fit of weeping.

"He has deserted me," she sobbed. "I married him secretly because of his parents. He promised to send me money until he came home from Africa again. I have not heard now for weeks and weeks. My money is all gone—I can't keep my baby any longer——"

I looked at her steadily.

"You are going to abandon your child?" I asked.

She nodded her head, sobbing that it was better for the child. She had no one to mind him when she was out working. She had no relatives, no friends.

There in that studio dressing-room, she told me her pitiful story; and in the end, as she stood before my mirror wiping her eyes, she promised she would wait, now that my crystal had told her that her husband had not deserted her—that he was only ill, very ill. Months later, a tall haggard man came to my house, and I noticed an ugly scar across his temples.

"I want to thank you," he said abruptly, "for what you did to help my wife. You kept her from committing a terrible act—that of deserting our baby."

Then, as I stared at him, not understanding, a girl came quickly in, her face radiant, her eyes shining with happiness. Holding out the baby, which crowed in her arms, to me, she pointed to my crystal.

"She saw it all in there, Bob," she exclaimed, as she met, smiling, her husband's eyes.

CHAPTER XI

THE DESERTED BRIDE

IT is not often one comes across such a romance and tragedy in real life as I unravelled by the combined help of a mirror and my crystal. It is not often that one hears of a husband and wife who quarrel, part, are divorced, and marry again, only to find that they are still madly in love with one another. But this is the surprising story which was lately revealed to me.

An extremely pretty, well-dressed girl came to see me, and told me that for certain reasons she did not want to disclose her identity. When I looked into the crystal I was so amazed that I took up my hand-glass, to see what would be reflected there. Practically the same vision formed in it as in the crystal. I saw the girl beside me, married to a man whom she apparently adored, but who left her for an older, red-haired woman. I next saw my visitor's second marriage, following on a divorce, and, as faces and figures flashed in the crystal, I told her what evidently astonished her.

"You were married some years ago," I said, "but your husband carried on an intrigue with another woman, and in the end you divorced him."

She nodded, but did not speak.

"You would be happy with your present husband, but all the time you realize you are in love with the other."

I looked searchingly into the mirror. "That other is coming back into your life soon. He will try to take you away from your present home."

Eagerly she leant towards me, and I saw the nervous twitching of her hands. "And if he comes," she asked breathlessly, "shall I go?"

I did not answer. I could not tell her of all the disappointment that lay before her.

I shook my head vaguely. I knew she would not go. She was so very pretty and fascinating that she made a deep impression on me.

Some weeks later I was surprised to see her face gazing up at me out of the crystal, when I was looking into it for a stranger, who had just come from abroad. He was a titled man, good-looking, but showing signs of having suffered from strain.

The next moment, even as I stared at the reflection of the girl, there came another vision, that of a red-haired woman. She was evidently my present visitor's wife, and in a flash I guessed who he was. I told him at once that I had seen and recognized the vision of his first wife, whom I knew.

He seemed taken aback. Then springing to his feet, he paced my room, as he confessed the mad impulse which had, after the war, made him desert the wife he really loved for a woman who for the moment had infatuated him.

"What can I do?" he asked me, desperately. "I know my mistake. I am more than ever in love with my first wife. She is married to a decent man—— but when I ask her, do you think she will come away with me now?"

I looked into the crystal and shook my head.

"Then she must love him!" he exclaimed, his face darkening with sudden jealousy.

"She loves you," I answered, reading the ball; "but this other has played the man by her. He has been good to the child you deserted. . . . She cannot, in return, desert him and his little son."

He did not speak for a moment. Then he stood up.

"I am going to see her now. She does not know I am in England. I did not want her to know, until I found out that her husband was away. He is in Gibraltar with his regiment. In spite of what you say, I am going to ask her to come away with me."

With these words he moved towards the door. As he did so, it opened, and my page boy stood upon the threshold to announce the fair-haired girl behind him.

For a moment she stood rigid, staring with wide, startled eyes at the man, who, for his part, as if she had been a ghost, stood rooted to the spot, his breath coming in thick, heaving gasps. The next instant a cry broke from her lips, and he sprang towards her.

It was an intensely dramatic moment, worthy of some thrilling three-act drama or screen romance. The threads of a broken love romance were picked up again, there, in the room. I knew, though the world little guessed it, that, like two guilty lovers, husband and wife met afterwards in far-away secluded lanes, or amongst the rocks of Cornwall, to try and find some way out of the tangle that a man's momentary madness had caused. I knew he pleaded with the wife, as few men have pleaded with any woman, to throw up everything for the love he himself had once cast aside.

But although she would come to me sobbing in her despair and torment, she refused. She could not, she

said, hurt the man who had stood by her in her troubles, and had taken, to cherish as his own, the child who had been deserted by his own father.

By a strange irony of fate, her first husband's second wife one day came to seek my help !

And during the year, a gallant, honest-hearted soldier, home on leave from Gibraltar, called to ask me to read the crystal for him. He was bubbling over with life and spirits, delighted at being home with the wife whom he openly declared he adored.

In the crystal I saw her face. A sweet girlish face, framed in a halo of fair hair. He did not know, I don't think he will ever know, how nearly he had lost her. He did not dream of the sleepless nights she spent, sobbing, on her pillow, as she fought against the longing which urged her to answer her first husband's call and desert this other.

But it was a strange position for me, to read in turn, in the crystal, the destinies of the four actors in one of the strangest love dramas I have ever known, of the very existence of which, two of those most concerned do not know. The second husband and wife of the divorced couple are still, and I hope always will be, in that blissful ignorance which at times shows the folly of being wise.

About the same time another love-story impressed me very deeply.

I had gone to spend a few days with some friends whose large country house was filled with a cheery party. Amongst the guests was a charming dark-haired girl of about twenty, who made great friends with me, and, the first evening we met, begged me to look in the crystal for her, as she was very anxious to know what was in store for her in the immediate future.

"I am to be married very soon," she said, "and my *fiancé* is coming here to-morrow for the week-end."

Willingly, I looked into the crystal in my room, when the rest of the party had gone to bed.

To this day I remember the scene, as we sat together in candlelight before the table in the long oak-panelled room, with the moonlight slanting through the diamond-paned windows. Before long, I realized, as I stared in silence into the ball before me, that the girl at my side was the victim of a cruel wrong.

"Do you see Jack, my *fiancé*?" she asked me eagerly.

I hesitated. How could I tell her, I asked myself, of the vision I had had of a man who was not free, whose wife and children appeared in the crystal with him? I knew he was the *fiancé*, as there had flashed also a picture of him with his arms around the girl beside me.

Slowly and reluctantly, wishing I had never come to that house, and hating the sense of duty which urged me to warn her, I told her I saw a man, and described his appearance. The girl eagerly exclaimed that it was the man to whom she had given her heart. I also told her that I did not see any possibility of her marriage. She stared at me in dismay.

"But, dear Miss Montague," she cried. "We are receiving wedding presents every day! We are to be married in a few weeks!"

I did not answer. I put away the crystal, and excused myself, on the grounds of fatigue, from reading more. I felt I could not at that time break the news that she would never be the bride of the man she loved. I wanted time to consider what I should do; how I could make the inevitable revelation to her by merciful

degrees She left me, obviously troubled at what I had said

On the following day she brought, to introduce to me, a tall red-haired man, who smiled with winning non-chalance

"Amy wants me to ask you to read my destiny," he said "As you know, we are going to be married, and she probably wants to find out what hidden crimes her future husband has committed!"

He spoke with bantering gaiety, and as the girl's eyes met mine I saw them flash triumphantly I sensed her conviction that I must soon discover my mistake

A few minutes later, Captain R—— and I went into a small boudoir, and I took up my crystal

As I did so, a strange picture formed I saw the man beside me facing a woman on whose hand was a wedding ring, and who held in her arms a tiny child, while another clung to her skirts I could see from what followed that I was witnessing an angry scene between husband and wife. I raised my head, and met the eyes of the man beside me

"I saw in the crystal," I said, "that you had a violent quarrel and parted from your wife"

For a second a strange light flashed in his eyes, and I noticed that he repressed a start Then, with wonderful self control, he laughed aloud

"I say," he exclaimed, "isn't your vision rather premature? I have never been married in my life," he added with exaggerated carelessness "This vision must apply to Amy's future and mine" He lit a cigarette "Sorry to hear we are going to quarrel," he added

I took no notice of his sarcasm

"I have never known a vision to be so utterly misleading," I answered. "In my crystal you appear already a married man."

He bit his lips. A soft tap at the door made him look up. On the threshold I saw Amy L——.

"It's all over," he said laughingly. "Miss Montague saw a vision of matrimonial strife." The girl started, and he rose and put his arm around her. "I have just told her," he went on, "that her crystal vision is premature. We're not married yet."

During the rest of my visit, I was aware that Amy and her *fiancé* avoided me.

On the evening before my departure for town, however, she came to find me in my room.

"I want you to look in the crystal once again," she said. "I am so worried over what you said you saw, and I do want you to tell me you see Jack and me happily married after all."

I hesitated. "Do you think it is wise?" I asked her. "I may see something which will worry you more."

She shook her head.

"No, no, I want you to tell me—no matter what it is."

With no little reluctance I did as she asked me. I had a foreboding that nothing but evil would be reflected.

Dimly, at first, more distinctly afterwards, I saw the figure of Amy. She was cowering at the foot of what appeared to be an altar. Men and women were bending over her. She was dressed in white, and a veil covered her hair and face. She was a bride—alone—without a bridegroom. Amy watched me with feverish impatience.

"Do you see my marriage?" she asked, and her voice was not quite steady.

I shook my head, and a feeling of intense sympathy and compassion swept over me.

"My dear," I said regretfully. "I do not see any marriage."

I took her hands in mine, and tried to persuade her to find out more about her *fiancé*. I begged her to get her father, a captain in the Navy, to make searching inquiries. She only wrenched her hands free, and half-crying, told me she wished she had never asked me to look in the crystal, as what I said was making her miserable without cause.

I did not hear of her again for some weeks, when I received an invitation to her wedding, enclosed in a letter, asking me as a personal favour to come and see how wrong the crystal had been, and how happy she was. I accepted the invitation, and on a glorious April day went down by train to the little village where Amy L—— was to become a bride. As I drove through, the whole village was *en fête*. Bunting flew from the cottage windows, and over the porch of the church a large Union Jack floated on a flower-decked pole.

The church was filled with people when I arrived. But time was passing, and gradually excited whispers were heard, and people craned their necks to look towards the door.

The bridegroom was late.

Suddenly a stir passed through the church as in the distance echoed the hoot of a motor horn. A moment later, we heard a car stop before the door.

The strains of a wedding march poured from the organ loft; and up the aisle, leaning on her father's arm,

walked the bride with lowered eyes, all unconscious that no bridegroom stood waiting at the altar rails.

Through some mistake on the part of those standing at the door, her father had not heard that his prospective son-in-law had not yet arrived.

Someone darted from a pew towards him. The bride started and raised her head, and I saw her eyes, wide and frightened, glance in the direction of the chancel. Her face grew as white as the veil around her, and she passed on into the vestry.

It was not long, however, before a sigh of relief passed over the waiting throng of people. Once more the hoot of a motor horn had been heard. The bridegroom, who had been staying at an hotel with his best man, a few miles distant, had probably met with some mishap, a burst tyre perhaps, which had delayed him.

So those around me whispered. But for my part I was sick with a conviction of impending catastrophe as I watched the door.

Across its threshold the best man hurried. His face was excited and troubled. He looked wildly from left to right ; then made his way to the vestry, to face the stern man who had led his daughter up the aisle, and break his startling news.

The bridegroom was not to be found. When the best man had gone to the hotel, to drive with him to the church, there was no sign of him. His bed had not been slept in. . . .

On his table a letter had been found, addressed to the bride, to whom the best man now handed it. White to her lips, the girl took it, broke the seal, and read in silence. Then she pitched forward senseless into her father's arms, the man's confession of guilt fluttering from her hand.

He was a married man, but had left his wife and children years ago in Canada. There his wife had seen in an English paper the announcement of his impending marriage. Her cable, stating that she was communicating with the police, forced him to make good his escape.

It would be difficult to describe the sensation which convulsed the church. Never in the experience of those present had such an incident been known. Pushing past the throngs of horrified men and women, I made my way to the vestry, where I found the girl crouching, her face hidden in her cold quivering hands.

As her father gently raised her, her eyes, dazed and dull, met mine. A tremor passed over her, and she stretched her hands out pitifully, signing to me to go with her.

All through the night I watched her, fighting to retain her reason.

The tragedy, however, had a happy sequel. Two years later, I was again asked to a wedding, and this time the bridegroom, looking uncomfortably anxious and ill at ease, waited, before the appointed time, for his bride. Smiling she came at last, all traces of the ordeal of the past obliterated, as once more the organ crashed out for her the wedding march.

What became of Captain R—— we never heard. He left the Army, and disappeared altogether. That he did not return to the wife he had left I know ; for long afterwards she came to see me in England. She was trying to obtain employment in a cinema box office, as a means of supporting her deserted children and herself.

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Long before Lady Pitcairn Campbell married Sir William, long before she had ever met him, her second

marriage was reflected in my crystal. Vividly I saw in the depths of the ball a figure I knew and recognized ; but when I minutely described the distinguished soldier to her, she shook her head. She did not know anyone answering to the description. I told her she would meet him abroad, as the crystal indicated a journey at once.

" You are right," she answered. " I am going abroad almost immediately."

After her return to England she came to see me.

" You were absolutely right," she exclaimed, her eyes radiant with happiness. " I met the man you described, General Sir William Pittcairn Campbell, and the marriage you saw is to take place at once."

A tragic vision appeared one day when, at a dance in Mr. Howard Robinson's charming studio, I was reading the crystal for Mrs. Robert Kerr, wife of the well-known architect of the Rembrandt Hotel. As she had gone with me, laughing and smoking, to the room in which we were to hold our séance, Mrs. Kerr had kissed her hand to her husband, who was dancing, the gayest of a gay throng.

What I saw in the crystal was in such sombre contrast to this happy scene that I started and recoiled. A man was lying on his bed with closed eyes. He was the man to whom Mrs. Kerr had kissed her hand ; and I knew he was dead. The door opened, and a young man whom I recognized as his son, who was also among the dancers, rushed in to bend over the silent figure.

The clearness with which the scene appeared showed that it was not a tragedy in the distant future, for in that case it would have been blurred and indistinct. It was close at hand.

"What do you see? Tell me," Mrs. Kerr was saying.

As gently as I knew how, I warned her that before another New Year she would be a widow.

At first she looked aghast. Then she laughed to reassure herself. Her husband was so strong . . . so healthy. . . .

Four months afterwards, someone called me up on the telephone. It was Mrs. Kerr, telling me in broken accents that what I had foretold had come to pass.

Without any warning, without any illness, her husband had slipped into the Great Beyond. Peacefully, in his sleep, he had gone.

His son, going to his room to ask him a question, had found him dead.

The warning I had given, Mrs. Kerr said, had in some measure mitigated the fearful suddenness of the shock.

CHAPTER XII

HUMAN TELEPATHY AND ITS POWER

ALTHOUGH I have never made a scientific study of the question of Thought Transference or Human Telepathy, I have from a child known that distance itself cannot debar one soul from communication with another if there is a bond of sympathy between them. I am convinced from my own practical experience and from the results of my work that the power of human thought is infinite. Nothing, if it is rightly used, can enfeeble its power, and personally I find the greatest happiness in believing that, whatever miles may separate us, our thoughts can bring us into close, living touch, with those we love. We can hold intercourse with them as if we were with them in the flesh.

In olden days, it was wise men who devoted their lives to the interpretation and science of dreams. Dreams were considered in Biblical times as signs, in many cases, from the Almighty Himself.

We know it was by a dream that the Angel warned St. Joseph to take the Saviour and His Mother and flee from danger. St. Joseph did not scorn the warning as an old woman's tale. He acted upon it, and saved the lives of those in his care.

One of the strangest cases I have ever heard of, or proved, occurred not very long ago, and is well worthy of record. It was past midnight, and I was writing a

chapter dealing with a romance of Eastern life, for a serial entitled "Indian Nights," which was afterwards bought by the Amalgamated Press

I was describing the anguish of a young girl imprisoned in an Eastern potentate's palace. Lying on a divan in the room where she was an unwilling captive, and staring at the red glass window, which was securely bolted from without, she saw, to her horror, two brown hands appear and force the bolt. The next moment—"the window went slowly up—up—up——" (I quote the actual words of the story for a reason which will be understood later)

The imprisoned girl then saw a man in Eastern dress, who, springing through the open window, came to her with outstretched, clawing hands. In her fright she dashed to the locked door and desperately rattled the handle.

The chapter finished, I glanced at the clock. It was just 1.35 a.m., and I went to bed.

In the morning, my daughter Marcella, between whom and myself there has always been a very wonderful bond of sympathy, came to me and said that she had suffered the most horrible nightmare of her life. And when I asked her laughingly what it was, the following was her description.

"I dreamt that I was in bed in my own room, and as I looked at the window, I saw the panes had become red. As I wondered what had happened, I saw two brown hands appear from outside and seem to fumble with the sash. The next moment, the window went slowly up, up, up, and before I could recover from my terror, an Indian sprang into the room and crept towards me with outstretched hands. I dreamt that I sprang out

of bed, and rushed to the door. It was locked ! I struggled to unlock it, and then I awoke, to find myself out on the landing, shaking with terror."

She added that she would have come to me, but noticed my light was out, and did not want to disturb me.

" I always lock my door," she went on, " and I must have unlocked it in my fright and rushed out on the landing before I awoke."

I asked her what time it was when she went back to her room ? She said " It was just five and twenty to two."

Without saying any more, I took up the last sheets of my manuscript and asked her to read them. When she had done so, she stared at me in bewilderment.

" But," she exclaimed, "*that is my dream !*"

Until then, she had heard absolutely nothing about the story in question.

At the very moment when I was depicting a scene on paper, that scene was being impressed on her mind in another room while she slept.

I think this instance, which others besides myself can corroborate, as Marcella told my maid the story of her dream before she saw me, helps to prove the amazing potency of unconscious telepathy, and suggests still greater possibilities of the power when *consciously* used.

Another astonishing instance had happened some years previously, when Marcella—then only a child—knew what was happening to me though I was far away from her.

At a moment's notice, without even being able to pack my case, I had to rush over to Ireland. The telegram which necessitated my going arrived just in time to let me catch the night mail.

I had no time to tell anyone. In any case, I did not wish my two children, Marcella and Bunty, who were at school at Worthing, to be told, as I knew how they would fret at my leaving England.

During the crossing, the steamer had a narrow escape from being torpedoed. I shall never forget the scene. We were all on deck, our life-belts on, by command, ready to leave the ship.

That same night, Marcella, at the very hour when the torpedo just missed the ship, sprang up in bed in the silent dormitory screaming that she saw me in terrible danger on the sea. She said I was drowning—and it was in vain that the mistress tried to pacify her. She only sobbed more bitterly. She would not listen when she was reminded that that very day I had rung up to talk to her from London. Half frantic with grief and terror, she cried distractedly. She had seen me in her dream, wearing a life-belt on the deck of a sinking ship.

Between my sister and myself there exists another bond, which enables her always to know whenever I am in trouble.

Two years ago, I was suddenly taken very ill, and was obliged to have two nurses. I did not wish anyone to write to my sister. She was in Ireland and I did not want to worry her. But shortly after I had been taken ill, she sent a telegram: "I know you are ill—wire." Then a letter followed. "No one has written to tell me, but I know you are ill. I dreamt I saw two nurses beside your bed. I have not slept for anxiety since that dream."

Another rather wonderful incident is connected with quite a trivial matter. A Sealyham terrier was brought

to the house as an unexpected gift on the same morning that a well-known film-actor came to lunch with me. The following day I had a letter from my sister in Ireland. "I dreamt I saw you having lunch with the actor Mr. Rex Davis, and thought you were showing him a new Sealyham dog. Have you got one?"

I have often heard people object that telepathy should depict visions or transmit messages during hours of wakefulness as well as sleep. In myriads of cases it does. Although the actual visions of events happening to people far away may not usually be seen by others except when asleep, thoughts, presentiments and impressions concerning the absent rise at any hour of the day, and are due to a connecting link of thought or sympathy between the persons concerned.

It frequently happens that a person will sit down to write a letter to a friend, perhaps not written to or heard of for a long time, while at the same moment that friend will also determine to write, with the result that the letters cross. This is not a mere fluke or chance. It is the result of telepathy.

One of the waking visions seen by many people came to a friend who was going out to India to be married to an officer stationed near Bombay.

During the voyage, the girl, who was of a happy, lively disposition, became extremely popular with her shipmates, and on the evening of the day preceding that on which the liner was to reach her destination, was playing "Blind Man's Buff." Suddenly she became deathly white and staggered against the rail of the ship, where she cried as if her heart would break. After a little, she said she knew her *fiancé* was dead. She had had a vision of him lying dead upon the ground, and,

shuddering, she declared that all around him were huge birds.

Her bewildered friends took her to her cabin, where she lay sobbing inconsolably. All she would say to explain her grief was that her *fiancé* was lying dead, his face and head covered with blood, surrounded by a circle of gruesome-looking birds. In vain they assured her that the man she mourned would meet her in the morning.

On the following day, supported by some of the passengers, the girl stood, a ghost of her merry self of a day ago, and watched the boats which were hastening to meet the incoming ship. "There's the General's launch," one woman said. "Now you will see you have imagined all this tragedy."

A little later, a tall man in uniform stepped upon the deck and called the girl's name. She moved forward to meet him, and before he could speak she read his troubled eyes.

"You need not tell me," she said. "I know—he is dead."

He stared at her in astonishment. "No," he stammered. "The doctors say there is hope."

Then those thronging round heard how on the preceding day, at the very hour when the girl, in the middle of a romp, had suddenly begun to sob aloud, her *fiancé* had mounted his horse to ride away from the Residency. An hour later, frightened natives rushed back to say that he lay dying upon the road. That he still lived they knew, because the vultures watching in a circle round him had not yet begun to devour their prey.

The man was brought back to the Residency unconscious on a stretcher. His sad plight was soon

explained. His horse, a high-spirited Arab, had shied, bolted, and fallen, flinging his rider, whose head had struck a heap of sharp stones.

He lay in the Residency for weeks without gaining consciousness, nursed by the General's wife (my mother) and his promised bride, until, little by little, their tireless care dragged him back from the grave.

This incident is true in every detail. The man who cheated the vultures was my father's staff captain.

There can be no doubt that if only we realized the power of telepathy, perfect and reliable mental intercourse could be established the world over, irrespective of space or climate.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LONELY BUNGALOW ON "THE CRUMBLES"

ONE of the most poignantly terrible of all my experiences connected with crystal-gazing, or any other form of psychic vision, undoubtedly occurred when I was asked to go to the lonely bungalow on "the Crumbles" after the awful murder of Emily Kaye by Patrick Mahon, which for so long baffled investigation.

A small, neat cottage, which had been the coastguard officer's residence, it presented, as I entered it, a peaceful appearance. It seemed an ideal spot for a holiday rest, but when I opened the door of the sitting-room, I was at once conscious of an oppressive and nerve-racking sensation of bitter discord and conflicting passions let loose.

Determining to master my emotions, however, I glanced round the comfortably furnished room.

Almost the first thing that drew my attention was the bookcase near the door. It was well stocked with volumes on different subjects, but it was a paper-covered novel which at once riveted my gaze. I picked it up. It was the story of the murder of a girl. On the cover a man was shown with outstretched hand clasping a pistol, while the girl, her dress trapped in a locked safe, held out her arms, screaming.

From the position of the book, it had evidently been read quite recently.

When I looked into the crystal, I saw, dimly reflected, the figures of a man and woman. As the vision faded and others took its place, I witnessed a quarrel and violent struggles. . . . Then, under my eyes, the crystal slowly changed to a dark dull red, the sign, my ayah had always taught me, of approaching murder.

With an effort I looked again, striving to keep calm. I was determined to see—— Was it murder? Had the unfortunate girl met her doom at the hands of the man she trusted? Or, was her death the result of misadventure?

. Slowly there formed the outline of a face . . . a girl's face. . . . I saw her eyes staring up, her arms outstretched, her hands clutching the air. Then the vision faded.

I own I was a coward. Unable to stand the strain any longer, and holding my crystal in one hand, I rushed through the kitchen where I knew the monster had actually cooked the remains of the woman to whom he had made love, and flinging open the door, I stepped out into the garden for air.

I stood there for a moment, trembling and staring about me. Then, catching at the doorpost to steady myself, I looked once more into the crystal—and here I had my most vivid vision. I saw a dog ravenously snatching at something with his mouth. He had been digging madly, and now he had got what he had been searching for.

The vision faded, but not before I had seen what he had in his mouth. It was dreadful. As I moved away towards the gate, I was horrified to observe the dog I had seen in the crystal—a rough-haired terrier. *He was digging madly even as I had seen him in the vision.*

I watched him in horror as, barking, he snatched at something—the thing I had seen in the crystal.

Fearful lest I should see more, I fled away from the gruesome spot, where, later, dogs were employed to dig up what Mahon had buried out of sight.

My friends told me that I had been in the place two hours. Not for a fortune would I undertake such a vigil again.

Another gruesome experience came about in the most unexpected manner possible.

I had been invited to a cheery house-party in the country, and after tea one day my hostess told me she wanted me to read the crystal for her, and begged me to bring it to some secluded spot out of doors. So we went beyond the gardens to a large straw rick and climbing up on top of it, we commenced our *al fresco séance*.

Anything more horrible or unexpected I could not have imagined. When I looked into the crystal I saw a man lying face upwards on some straw, with a terrible gaping wound in his neck. Hastening away from him, moved another figure, that of a man who clutched something in his hand.

I suppose the expression on my face betrayed my feelings, for my friend asked me anxiously what was wrong. I told her that somewhere near us a murder must have been committed. She stared at me incredulously.

"My dear Nell," she exclaimed, "no one has ever heard of a murder here."

What I saw determined me to speak to her husband, but he pooh-poohed my story.

"It's quite impossible," he said. "No murder, or death either, has taken place in the yard."

A few days later I had to return to town, but as I drove away I glanced apprehensively in the direction of the great straw rick.

What was the mystery, I asked myself, of the vision I had seen?

Some weeks passed, and then, to my surprise, I received a telegram from the friend with whom I had been staying, asking me to go to her at once. Thinking she must be ill or in some trouble, I packed my suit-case and caught a train from Waterloo, wiring to let her know when I would arrive.

The motor was at the station to meet me, but as there was a stranger guest, who had arrived by the same train as myself, in the motor, I did not like to question the chauffeur as to the cause of my hasty summons.

As we drove up the avenue, it was getting dusk, and looking in the direction of the straw rick I was conscious of the same strange feeling of horror I had felt when I had sat there with my crystal in my hands. Then I looked more intently. Was the rick on fire? A red living light seemed to emanate from it, and I saw men moving about with lanterns in their hands.

"Porter," I exclaimed, "what are police doing there?"

"They're looking after the body that was found there, Miss," he said.

Then, as I stared at him in amazement, he explained. That morning his mistress had been attracted by the excited barking of her two dogs, who were digging frantically in the centre of a cut in the straw rick.

Thinking they had killed a weasel or rat, she climbed

up to them. Just as she did so, her bulldog, with a low growl, scratched out something which she at first sight took to be a large field turnip. But the next instant her screams, as she dashed back through the yard, startled the grooms in the stables. She had seen that what she had thought was a turnip was a human skull.

By degrees the mystery was solved. The skeleton was proved to be that of a man who had been missing for months. He had disappeared from his home, after going to the bank with some money which he had received in payment for some cattle. The last person seen in his company was his brother, a ne'er-do-well, who had since left the country. It was surmised that he had murdered his brother for the money, and had buried the body in the rick, hoping that the straw would burn it beyond recognition before it was found. But for the dogs it would have lain undiscovered until the end of the winter.

I am often asked if I do not find many people's lives reflected in the crystal uninteresting and monotonous. I do not. No life is really uninteresting. Besides, events are shown in proportion to the circumstances of the person to whom they occur. For instance, if some poor clerk lost fifty pounds, the loss would perhaps appear in the crystal as almost overwhelming. But if some rich person were to lose that amount, the fact might not even be shown.

Many hundreds of poor women and girls come to consult me, but their lives do not seem commonplace and uneventful, for invariably there will appear certain things which seem outstanding and all-important.

Of course, when I read the crystal for some poor mill-hand, or a woman whose life is perhaps spent in a laundry, the crystal does not scintillate with the amazing variety of events which I have seen when I have looked into the depths for the beautiful Viscountess Curzon, Lady Innes-Ker (José Collins) Lady Keeble (Lillah Macarthy), Fay Compton, or Lady Alexandra Curzon. For the last named I read the crystal just before her father's death, and foresaw the shadow of change, and her own marriage.

Yet, in their lesser degree, the lives of even the most humdrum appear, in the crystal, full of importance and variety, according to the law of proportion.

Not long ago I was awakened by my page boy knocking violently on the door at 6.30 a.m. Demanding rather irritably why he had called me an hour earlier than usual, he informed me that "two ladies had called to see me." They had said they had come from Yorkshire on purpose to consult me, and, travelling all night, had arrived at some unearthly hour at the station. After waiting until six o'clock, they had come to my house, as they wanted to make certain I would not be out!

Later, when I went down after having sent them some breakfast, I found two well-dressed middle-class women, the younger of whom told me she wanted my help. I noticed she carried a large brown paper parcel. As her friend left us to wait in another room, she fumbled with the string of the parcel.

"It is about my husband I have come to you," she said. "So, as I heard you put things round the crystal, I have brought some of his clothes. I did not bring clean ones," she went on. "These are what he was wearing for a week before he went away."

There fell out a strange collection of male underwear, a vest and another garment, socks, a collar, and several handkerchiefs, not to mention braces and a tie ! Rather hastily, I picked out the least "worse for wear" and placed the tie on the ball. Then I told the woman that I saw a vision of herself, alone, deserted by her husband. As I described what was reflected, she uttered excited ejaculations, corroborating what I said.

Her husband, she informed me, had suddenly deserted her, leaving no message, no explanation. All attempts to trace him had failed, and the general supposition was that he had either sailed in some ship from Liverpool, or put an end to his life.

As I looked again into the ball, there formed the picture of a small house, beside the door of which I saw an old woman talking to a man, who I realized must be the missing husband.

I described the house and the woman minutely, and my companion sprang to her feet.

"That is his aunt's house in London," she cried. "That's the old woman you see. We haven't heard from her for years, for she always disliked him marrying me."

Gathering up the scattered articles of her husband's clothing, she declared she was going "straight away" to the house I had seen.

The following day, she came again to see me. She had discovered her husband. He had fled to his aunt, who had acquiesced in his desertion of the wife she disliked, intending to complete, while with her, his preparations for a journey to Australia.

The mention of a distant colony reminds me of the keen interest I felt when I read the crystal for Sir Harry Johnston. Some of the visions which flashed in the

crystal amazed me, while, as I described them, the great explorer confessed astonishment at their vivid accuracy.

Another, whose visit evoked crystal visions that impressed me by the varied vividness of their scenes, was Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes, the famous Persian authority, whose wonderful collection of Persian curios is the finest in the world.

The late Monsignor O'Riordan once asked me to look in the crystal for him. I told him that I saw his promotion to some post abroad, to be followed by an illness, which would nearly result in death. I assured him he would recover, but warned him he would lie at death's door and actually *be mourned as dead*. Months later he wrote from Rome to tell me that the vision had come true, as he had been sent to Rome as Rector of the Irish College, and he added, "the other portion of the vision has come true also." He had been at death's door after a severe illness, and had been "mourned as dead." "I have on my desk beside me," he wrote, "a cutting from a paper *describing my own funeral*."

CHAPTER XIV

MASCOTS A PLEA FOR CLAIRVOYANTS

I AM often asked, by people writing from every part of the world, whether I believe in the virtue of charms or mascots as a means of attracting good luck to their possessors. Like most people born in the East, and familiar with its traditions, I do

The use of mascots, whether to bring good fortune or ward off evil, is age-old and universal. They are the fetishes of primitive savages. They were an element in the romance of the Middle Ages, when the armoured knight carried into battle, for his protection and encouragement, the charm which his lady love had blessed with her prayers.

And even in the work-a-day modern world there are still many of us who do not scorn to pin our faith to our own pet "happiness-carrier"

In every clime, among people of all creeds and classes, some particular form of mascot has been individually or collectively cherished. At the head of the list, perhaps, may be placed the little bone found in the shoulder of a tiger, which is supposed, by Europeans and natives alike, to be powerful in attracting good luck, and is eagerly sought after by those who believe in its value. Its apparent uselessness in the tiger's body—being "all upon its own" and literally "at a loose end"—has made its existence a mystery, which has begotten this

belief in its power. It must have some use—if not a natural, then a supernatural one.

In the animal world, in which figures so many celebrated mascots, the “star turns” are monkeys, dogs and elephants. I put them in the order in which they are valued in many parts of the East. Either to possess the actual animal, or constantly to carry a miniature representation of it, is supposed to ward off catastrophe, illness and financial ruin.

The cult can hardly be dismissed as an “old wives’ fable” by even the most intolerantly incredulous when gallant regiments march proudly behind their leading mascot, and crews of Britain’s bulldog breed face all sorts of dangers and privations at sea, happy in the knowledge that their own particular “luck bringer”—whether a four-footed friend or a bird—is aboard with them.

One of the mascots most treasured by seafaring men is a human caul. Whoever is born with a caul, or is in touch with one—so runs the superstition—will always escape death by drowning. Sailors will pay enormous sums to possess such a mascot.

Some of our greatest men have not been loth to accept talismans in times of danger and stress. Doubtless they are influenced by the belief that the good wishes and prayers accompanying these gifts could only be productive of good.

National mascots are respected the world over. The Rose of England and the Thistle of Bonny Scotland always stir a feeling of sentiment.

On board the “Iron Duke” in the thrilling days of ’16, Admiral Lord Jellicoe, did not scorn “white heather” sent him for success, and one Field Marshal

I knew treasured all through the stormy days of war a tiny horseshoe made of elephant's hair, a talisman of no mean repute, according to Eastern ideas. We all know what an important part in cheering hearts was played by mascot gifts. The very ardour of the good wishes of the givers brought, if nothing else, cheer to the receivers.

Black cats certainly bring many folk "the best," and Bob Chisholm and other Australian "stars" will never cross to their native country without the jet black pussies who guard their stage success and luck. There are morbid people who glory in trying to procure a mascot according to their own gruesome tastes, and I have met those who delighted in the possession of a morsel of a hangman's rope or a piece chipped from a tomb!

But such things are not the genuine mascots, which, from some specific cause, have been traditionally looked upon as talismans to attract good.

Perhaps owing to my experience in India, I would recommend a monkey as a mascot to all who have entered this world in an Eastern clime. Monkeys are supposed to bring much luck to owners born where monkeys live. Those who cannot attempt to keep a live monkey, can always secrete a miniature model about their persons. Personally, I always have a monkey, not in metal or wood or fluff, but in the flesh, and even if I do find "Judy's" pouches are the receptacles for many of my most treasured knick-knacks, I am happy in the knowledge that she does bring me luck!

One of the most interesting mascots I have ever seen was Sir Walter Raleigh's pipe, possessed by the late Governor of Hongkong, Sir Henry Blake, which once, without my knowledge, as I have already described, was

laid on my crystal by its owner. It was supposed to protect with force and power its owner against all cowardice and fear. And certainly Sir Henry's courage was outstanding.

Among professional men and women, there is a superstition that a shark's tooth is a charm against downfalls in money speculation. Elephant hairs are looked upon as lucky talismans to most people, while a miniature shoe, to all who are born without a silver spoon in their mouths, is believed to bring wealth. A well-known author insists upon keeping a withered bunch of mistletoe all the year round as a charm. He believes that the berries attract nothing but friendly influences about him, and this belief is shared by many Bretons, for in remote spots of Brittany I have seen mistletoe, dried and yellow, hanging upon the walls of houses in summertime. The owners insist that the berries prevent quarrelling and dissension.

The only mascot I have ever seen that absolutely appalled me was sent to me years ago, with great secrecy, by a certain Afghan Chief. He had heard I was interested in the study of Eastern talismans and mascots, and he sent me one which, he declared, would ensure my triumphant success and "overcoming of all trouble" both in the East and West.

My feelings can be better imagined than described, when, on opening the numberless coverings, I discovered a human scalp ! The giver had sent me the trophy of his enemy, the unhappy victim of his own hand.

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Year by year I notice a very marked spread of the belief in psychic power and second sight. Things once looked upon as hysterical hallucinations or "old wives'

fables " are now considered by clever men and women to be the means by which difficulties can be solved and troubles lightened, if not altogether circumvented.

It was because he had proved the truth of psychic power that that well-known novelist and writer, Douglas Sladen, asked me to write the foreword of his novel "The Sphinx." The book owed its inception to a party given by that well-known doctor, Elizabeth Sloan Chesser, at her house in Harley Street. I was amongst the guests, and was asked if I would look in my crystal for a young, smartly-dressed girl, who had just come to London on a visit from Scotland. As I hadn't my crystal with me, I offered to look in a hand-glass instead.

When the girl and I sat in a little room by ourselves, I saw the reflection of a grey-haired man.

"You will marry unexpectedly, but almost at once," I said, "a man more than twice your age. He has long grey hair and is a widower." I went on to describe to her my vision of a marriage ceremony beneath a large cedar tree.

"If I ever marry such a person, I will let you know," the girl said, and left me without even telling me her name. Some time afterwards, she hurried up to me at a reception.

"You are marvellous!" she exclaimed, breathlessly. "What you foresaw, has indeed come to pass. I am going to be married to a man more than twice my age—the man you described. Come and be introduced."

She introduced me to Mr. Douglas Sladen; but before she could speak his name, I had recognized him as the man I had seen with his young bride beneath the cedar. And their marriage took place beneath the cedar tree in Mr. Sladen's garden at Richmond!

After that, Mr. Sladen would often seek the guidance of my crystal visions, which, as I have said, impressed him so much that he wrote "The Crystal and the Sphinx."

In our go-ahead, matter-of-fact, but enlightened century, there is a steadily increasing tendency among influential men and women to demand fair play for the practice of occult powers, which many, many centuries ago, were acknowledged as the guidance and help of ruler and subject alike. Personally, I warmly advocate this movement.

There are certain deep-rooted prejudices in the minds of many people against the encouragement of clairvoyants, mediums, and all who are supposed to practise superstitious arts or deal in "black magic." In many cases, these prejudices are well founded, for, unfortunately, in the psychic walk of life, as in every other, there are impostors. But it is not the British way to condemn anyone without trial, and there is a growing demand in England that clairvoyants and mediums should be accorded the fair play they enjoy abroad. The medical profession is not banned because a representative here and there has transgressed the law and been convicted of making a perverted use of his knowledge to destroy rather than to preserve life. The entire legal profession is not regarded as condemned because one sometimes hears that a lawyer has fraudulently tampered with trust funds. Nor is any other profession placed under the perpetual shadow of disrepute because of the shortcomings of a few back-sliders.

In every walk of life, back-sliders will be found who put themselves beneath the ban of public censure, but each in turn has at least been given a hearing before judgment and condemnation have been passed.

Speaking as one who from babyhood has possessed second sight, I quite agree that charlatans and humbugs, dabbling in occult mysteries only to mislead the unwary and ignorant, should not be tolerated ; but—and it is a big *but*—those who do possess psychic gifts which can be useful to humanity should be given fair play.

Before putting up a plate over their doorway to invite the trust and patronage of the public, professional men and women have to prove their merit by training and test. In the same way let mediums and clairvoyants give evidence of their powers, and then be permitted to carry on their calling, so long as they adhere strictly to its legitimate functions.

Instead of condemning wholesale those who are born with second sight, and who genuinely have occult powers, those in authority should provide facilities for the cultivation and development of such gifts. It would then be easy to discriminate between the genuine medium or clairvoyant and the charlatan.

In every country in the world, since the beginning of time, men and women have been born diviners, able to get in touch with the unseen, able to visualize, through some power, the past, present, and future events in others' lives.

And this power of seeing into others' destinies, is fulfilling a great purpose of warning.

The greatest men the world has known since the beginning of time have eagerly sought help and advice from those acknowledged to possess occult gifts. Many tragedies and national disasters have thereby been averted.

The narrow-minded who are prejudiced against the present growing faith in things occult, even as, centuries

ago, their forebears scoffed at steam, cannot stem the turn of the tide which is sweeping so many thousands towards the attainment of occult knowledge and a closer link with the unknown.

In Paris, one *jour de l'an*, it was my privilege to meet M. Gelet, and at his particular wish I looked into my crystal for him. As I read the incidents of his past life, he expressed his surprise at the accuracy of the vision. Suddenly I started. Looking steadily into the crystal depths, I urgently warned him to be careful of height ; over and over again I repeated that he must avoid going up to any great altitude.

He smiled, but although he told me the past was mirrored truly, he did not seem to pay much heed to the warning I had given of disaster and danger ahead. As all the world knows, he met his tragic death when flying from Paris to London.

Another incident is very fresh to my mind. A Prince of Siam came to see me, and being a firm believer in the occult, asked me to look in the crystal for him.

I saw reflected many instances of a wonderful life in the past, all of which he acknowledged to be true. Then the glass changed, and I knew I was looking into the immediate future.

I told him I saw a long journey by sea, and implored him to postpone it. He assured me it was impossible to do so, as he was leaving England at once with his suite.

Once again I urged him to change his plans, but telling me that was impossible, he left.

Some time afterwards he came to me, and told me that, impressed in spite of himself by my warning, he had postponed his voyage, but had sent all his suite by the

boat arranged. They had all perished. There had been a terrible collision at sea, and not one of them had been saved.

"But for that vision," he said, and his voice shook as his eyes stared at my crystal, "I, too, would have shared their fate."

By all means, let mock mediums and clairvoyants be banned, even as Turf tricksters and other impostors are banned. The genuine medium and clairvoyant asks for nothing else. But for those who are genuine, let there be at least fair play.

CHAPTER XV

THE FAKIR'S CURSE—" PISHOGUE "

ABOUT two years ago a very attractive girl in her twenties came to consult me. She was an actress, and she said she was in trouble and wanted my advice. Beyond this she did not vouchsafe any information, and so, after giving her the crystal to hold, I took it and placed it on the table beside me.

At once there appeared in a dark mist the reflection of a man's face. As I described it, my visitor bent her head. " He is my husband," she said.

Other scenes followed rapidly. I realized that the girl before me was in love with her husband, but that as he had lost money and had failed to make good, her mother was urging her to induce him to let her divorce him, and marry a wealthy man who wanted her for his wife.

In almost confusing swiftness the visions came and vanished, and then I saw the girl standing beside a bridge beneath which black waters rushed, while she peered down at her own reflection, as if considering a fatal plunge. Her whole attitude betrayed the despair and misery I read in her face.

The visions puzzled me, and I failed to understand their meanings. In the present there was reflected married happiness, shadowed only by the man's financial loss, while the future mirrored the same love, but broken

by a forced divorce, followed by another marriage for the girl.

When I told her what I saw, to my dismay she flung herself face downwards on the divan and sobbed bitterly. "It is all true," she cried. "My husband and I love each other dearly, but he has failed in his business, and my mother is furious. She urges me to leave him, and ask him to let me divorce him, to marry a man who has been in love with me for years. I don't know what to do."

I did my best to console her, and convince her that her husband, given a chance, would make good. I used all my eloquence to beg her not to allow her mother and relations to make her commit the crime of divorcing the man she loved, in order to marry another for money.

She seemed comforted when she left, and assured me that her husband would be grateful for my advice.

A year later a man of about thirty came to my house. I was struck by the trouble in his dark eyes, and by the haggard misery of his face. He plunged into the subject of his visit.

"My wife came here a year ago," he said, "and you told her that although she loved me, she was thinking of forcing me to divorce her. You were right. She has done so. To please her, I gave her the necessary evidence for divorce. She is marrying the man her mother wishes her to, to-morrow." He clenched his hands. "I wanted to thank you for the help and advice you gave her at that time, and to ask a last favour. Look in the crystal now for me."

Without looking into the ball, I knew that I was near a pitiful tragedy. I knew that the man before me had no wish to face any longer his broken life. Then, as I

looked into the shining depths of the crystal, I could not repress a shudder.

I saw again the reflection of a dark gliding river, and the figure of a man leaning down, far down, his arms outstretched. The picture faded, and there came another, which showed me the man beside me, and a girl in his arms. Closely she clung to him, as about them there came the shadows of angry faces . . . of uplifted denouncing hands. I sprang to my feet, and touched the arm of the man, who was sitting with bowed head and nervously twitching hands.

"Your wife will come back," I exclaimed. "I can see you together again."

He stared at me stupidly. Then he shook his head. "It is too late," he said. "She cannot come back. Her wedding is to-morrow."

He was white to the lips and I knew that, unless a miracle happened, he would not look upon the morrow. In his brain, even as it had been in hers, the impulse towards suicide was at the moment terribly strong. For at least an hour I argued with him, begging him to give me his word not to fail her, even though she had failed him. I told him she would need him again.

At first, I made no headway with him. Then reluctantly, almost sullenly, he gave me his word. He would not end his sorrows, as he had meant to do—yet.

In the papers in the morning I saw the announcement of a wedding, and my heart ached for the man who had let another buy his wife.

Two days later, a pale-faced woman came to my house. Livid with anger, she told me that her daughter had run away from the man she had married two days previously,

had run away, my visitor vociferated, with her former husband !

Stamping up and down the room, she explained the purport of her visit. She had come to me for advice, to know what to do to make her daughter return to her lawful husband, and leave the man, who according to law, was no longer anything to her. I protested my inability to help her, and added the advice that she should leave her daughter alone with the man she loved.

Quite a scene followed, during which the angry woman accused me of having incited her daughter to desert her wealthy bridegroom.

Shortly afterwards, I received from the Continent a letter signed by two names. It was from two people, divinely happy, so the letter said, and awaiting eagerly a second divorce which would give them legally back to each other again !

I think this incident is one of the strangest of its kind I have ever come across.

They are still living outside the pale of orthodox respectability, as the outraged bridegroom of two days stubbornly refuses to legalize the romantic reunion by divorcing his wife ! Still, he may reconsider his adamant decision, and, in the meantime, the couple most concerned are waiting, beneath the sun of Egypt, where the man has obtained a job, to go through, once again, the ceremony of Holy Matrimony.

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An incident which always remains in my mind with poignant clearness took place some years ago, when I first met Colonel M——, a tall soldierly-looking man, a reckless rider to hounds, and a first-rate shot. It was

in Ireland when we were both members of the same house-party.

One evening, after I had been reading the crystal for some of my fellow-guests, he suggested a stroll in the garden. Presently, therefore, we stood leaning over the parapet overlooking the far-stretching park, and the river in the moonlight. Suddenly my companion uttered a rather forced laugh.

"I want so much to talk to you," he said, "and I want to ask you to read the crystal for me, although I am afraid." His voice sank as he spoke, and I noticed that his hands were clenched. "I am a man haunted by a shadow," he went on, "and if you were to tell me that you too saw the shadow in the crystal, I could not stand it any longer."

For a moment, I was too surprised to speak. He had always seemed such a jovial, happy-go-lucky sportsman! I would never have connected him with fear of any kind.

He saw my surprise, and laughed again.

"You must think me cracked or," he added, making a wry face, "*mad*." He spoke the last word slowly, as though his tongue caressed it, half gloating over what he dreaded. "Or mad," he repeated, leaning forward.

I was puzzled by the expression in his eyes. He drew himself up and laughed once more.

"I mean to conquer my terror to-night," he said. "I want you to look into the crystal, just to see if you will discover what I myself know must happen."

As we walked back to the house, and I went with him into the deserted library, I asked myself what could be the terror which had the strong, apparently fearless man beside me so strangely in its grip.

When I looked into the crystal, I saw the vision of a coatless man, riding a dapple-grey horse across a field towards me. The animal seemed to race out of the glass, and I could see the frenzied waving of the rider's arms as if calling for help. The next instant the vision faded into a blurred mist, in which there slowly formed another picture. Then—I realized only too well the horror that threatened the man.

He scrutinized my face narrowly. "*You see it?*" he asked in an eager whisper.

For a moment I knew not what to answer. I dared not tell him the horror I now saw shadowed in the ball. I felt I could not describe the dreadful vision of a man, apparently a raging madman, who paced a small room with pink, grey-edged curtains, a rifle in his hands, while in a mist there swam the reflection of other faces with wide, terrified eyes. I saw the madman raise his rifle, pointing it towards his own lips.

As I looked away, shuddering, I felt the pressure of the Colonel's fingers on my own.

"Tell me what you saw." His voice rang with passionate earnestness.

I shook my head, making an excuse that, having a headache, I could not see clearly. He did not believe me.

"You see what will happen," he said, rising and standing very erect and motionless before me. "I am threatened by a horror which terrifies me," he said. "I shall go mad, raving mad, and take my own life."

I stared at him in stupefaction. How had he become possessed of this ghastly knowledge? Then he went on talking.

"Years ago in India," he said, "I was cursed by a

fakir, when hunting in the jungle. I shot what I took to be a wild cheetah. Instead, I discovered the animal was the pet of an old fakir, who lived in the ruins of a shrine. Foaming at the mouth, he laid upon me this curse : ' I would die mad by my own hands.' "

I tried to argue, to assure the man beside me that it was foolishness to let such an idea take hold of him. But I knew India, and the weird, uncanny powers that lurk there.

" I want to know if you saw—the finish of that curse," he said.

Without answering him, I looked again into the crystal, hoping that I might see some less tragic vision. What I saw was a small stone house standing in a garden, surrounded by hills.

Colonel M—— nodded when I described it to him. " That is the shooting lodge I have taken," he said.

I went on to tell him that I saw a man galloping across some fields. Then I stopped short. The crystal had begun slowly to change in colour to a dark crimson, and I looked away, fearing that I should again behold a vision like the first.

Exclaiming that I could see no more, I left the room. Colonel M—— followed in silence.

The acquaintance begun in that country house in Limerick deepened into a great friendship, and I grew very much attached to the brusque, good-hearted soldier, and as his new home was not far from mine he often rode over to lunch or dinner.

One morning after breakfast, as I stood beside the dining-room windows, I saw, tearing at full gallop across the bog-skirted fields, a man riding a dapple-grey horse.

The poor animal was straining every nerve, and his rider urging him to even greater efforts. An indignant exclamation escaped me as I saw the man raise his whip. . . .

Then I started, for there rose before me the memory of another galloping grey horse—the horse I had seen reflected in my crystal, when I consulted it on behalf of the man who lived in hourly fear of oncreeping madness. Immediately afterwards I recognized the coatless rider as the soldier groom of Colonel M——, the new tenant of the lonely house upon the hill.

Before the servants came to tell me I was wanted, I rushed out to him. "Please come at once, Madam," the man panted. "The Colonel has gone stark staring mad. He has got his rifle loaded, and swears he will do himself in. None of us can go near him."

He wiped away the sweat which trickled in rivulets from his brow. "Seeing you have so much influence over him, I made so bold as to ask you to come."

I ran at once in search of my husband, and asked him to motor me to the Colonel's house, and then drive on another ten miles to fetch a doctor. Rather unwillingly and warning me to be careful, he left me at the gate, and I entered the house and mounted the stairs.

Outside the door of my friend's bedroom an ashy-faced groom met me and signed to me not to make any noise. I crept softly nearer, and peered through the door, which stood ajar. Colonel M—— sat on the edge of his bed, fully dressed. He was staring with horrible intentness down the barrel of the rifle in his hands. Suddenly raising his head, he saw me, and a look of terror and resentment blazed in his eyes, mixed with a strange mute entreaty.

"Go away!" he shouted. "Go away, or I will kill you. God, I am mad—mad!"

Trying to stifle my fear, I moved nearer, and spoke to him quietly. He sprang to his feet and turned his rifle towards the door.

"It's no good, they shan't take me to an asylum," he shouted. "I will shoot the first man who comes in. God in Heaven!" His voice shook. "Leave me, Nell, leave me, or I will kill you before I kill myself. I don't want to kill you. I don't want to——"

His voice fell into a sobbing whisper, very piteous to hear, and, terrified though I was, I realized that his only chance of life depended on my holding my ground and staying where I was. I felt I had still some hold upon his poor diseased mind. He had been so fond of me.

Surely, I thought, it could not be very long now before my husband came, bringing a doctor, and help.

How I endured the minutes which followed I do not know. With studied calm and carelessness, I chattered on about all the subjects I knew that interested my friend in normal times. But although he did not again raise the rifle, he never relinquished his hold. Again and again I implored him to give it to me. But any mention to it redoubled his excitement, and I knew that my only chance, and his, was to remain, apparently, quite self-possessed.

Suddenly he started. His ears, like mine, had heard the noise of a motor. I moved nearer to him, my heart beating with hope. Muttering to himself, the Colonel spoke, now in whimpering sobs, now in angry undertones, and with an air of nonchalance I was far from feeling, I went to the window.

Some men were getting quickly out of a car which stood before the gate, and hurrying towards the house. I knew that if they entered by the way I had come, a tragedy must happen. The man sitting on the bed would pull the trigger. Behind his back I made desperate signals, pointing to a ladder leaning against the wall. Then, praying that I had been understood, I returned to the man upon the bed.

The next few moments were awful. Above the muttering of the madman I could hear the muffled sound of hurrying feet outside, and, in a feverish endeavour to drown the sound, I talked on at random.

Suddenly something darkened the open window, and a man almost flung himself through the open casement upon Colonel M——. Another sprang after him, and there came the sound of heavy laboured breathing as three men, locked in each other's grip, swayed this way and that. Through the open door hurried the groom, his face like chalk, and snatched the rifle out of his master's reach. Snarling like a trapped animal, the Colonel fought with all a madman's unnatural strength, until at last, worn out with the unequal struggle, he sank down upon the floor.

He was kept, for some time, in a private asylum. Then, in spite of the warning of a brain specialist, he was allowed out, cured—so it was said. He returned to his lonely house, and for several months lived an apparently normal life there. But one day I received a telegram from an hotel some miles away: "Please come at once, Colonel M—— committed suicide to-day."

When I reached the hotel where the poor fellow had gone on a fishing expedition, I learned that, urged once more by sudden madness, he had taken his own life.

I stood, rooted to the spot, in a silent police-guarded room, staring from the quiet figure on the floor to the curtains shadowing the windows. *They were pink, with grey borders!* Was the tragedy before me, I asked myself, the tardy fulfilment of the fakir's curse, of which the dead man had been so much afraid?

In Ireland I had seen instances of the dread curse known as *pishogue*, by which a man can rob another of his material goods. The curse, the practice of which dates from very early days, and has been handed down from generation to generation among a few initiates, takes the form of a weird and terrible ritual, to invoke the aid of the Evil One. It is performed with the greatest secrecy, most of it at dead of night, and generally on some desolate mountain side.

Pishogue is in appearance like soft yellowish fungus, and is supposed to be endowed with the diabolical power of bringing ruin on the man who is cursed and of transferring his wealth to the curser. A striking instance of its use was brought to my notice some years ago, when I was staying with friends in Ireland.

My host, a prosperous gentleman farmer, asked me one night to look into the crystal for him, as he was contemplating some new undertaking.

To this day I can minutely recall the scene—the cosy library, the great logs crackling on the open hearth, and my host, a well-set up man of forty, leaning back in a comfortable saddle-bag chair. Farming so often considered a losing game, had been wonderfully successful for Major C——. This was entirely owing to his own efforts. I have seldom met a more indefatigable worker, and there was little chance for slacking on a farm where the owner set such an example of energy. So as I

peered into the crystal I never imagined I should see any reflection but that of the comfort and success around me.

To my astonishment there appeared vision after vision of ever-deepening poverty and decay. Beside what seemed to be the dead carcase of some animal, I saw my host, and his own appearance was that of a starved and ruined man. On what was apparently a piece of wooden paling was a mass of something that looked like yellow fungus.

My friend eagerly asked me to tell him what I saw. As I had never seen *pishogue*, and had no idea what it was like, the vision, unlike most that I had had, appeared to have no meaning whatsoever ; but I described it minutely.

The man beside me clutched my arm, imploring me to repeat my description ; and I was startled by the exclamation of horror, with which he sprang to his feet and faced me.

"God !" he exclaimed. "It is *pishogue*. You have described the curse which is to be put on me to ruin me."

I could only look my surprise. It seemed to me incredible that a man of his standing, education, and courage, for he had been a distinguished soldier, could show such fear in the face of a curse which I, in my ignorance, regarded more or less as superstition.

My friend pointed to the crystal. "Look again," he begged me, "and tell me everything you see. You don't realize what this may mean, for you may be able to tell me something which will help me to safeguard myself."

I peered, accordingly, into the ball. Slowly there formed in the black mist a man's face. He was a man

of about fifty, and his unkempt hair and beard seemed to enhance the horrid, leering cunning of his eyes. I described this face to my host.

Major C—— clenched his hands.

“You have described a man I know,” he exclaimed, “the most unscrupulous scoundrel in the parish. His cattle have been seized for rent, and his landlord wants to evict him. He would stop at nothing, not even—*pishogue*.”

“But surely,” I said, “you can prevent him injuring you?”

It seemed so incongruous to me that a man like my host, should be powerless to prevent his own ruin by an uneducated scamp.

The Major paced up and down the room, without answering. Then he wheeled round.

“Promise not to tell my wife or anyone else,” he said. “It would only terrify them.” He took my hand. “I am very grateful to you for your warning of what I may expect,” he added more quickly.

I did not see him for more than a year. At the end of that time I received a letter from him. “My wife and I want you to come up for a few days, if you don’t mind ‘pigging it’” he wrote, “for your vision has been verified with horrible exactness.”

A week later I stood in the familiar house and stared aghast at the haggard man before me.

“A few days after your vision,” he explained, “*pishogue* was found by my dairymaid smeared upon the posts of the dairy. My steward discovered it on the fence of a meadow where my prize dairy cows were.” He paused, and added, “I say ‘were,’ for out of my whole herd I have only a few left, after the disease which

mysteriously attacked them." Before I could speak, he went on : " The man whose face you saw in the crystal has suddenly been raised from ruin to success. He is becoming one of the richest farmers in the neighbourhood—nothing goes wrong with him now, and all the countryside are talking. They suspect *pishogue*."

It was the first time I had seen any evidence of the curse, and I was appalled when my host took me through the deserted cowsheds and the locked dairy, and to the fields which were now let out to other men's graziers, to enable their owner to keep going.

Later I heard the sequel to the strange affair. The man whose face I had seen mirrored in the crystal, met with a sudden and terrible death, gored by a prize bull he had bought, by the irony of fate, from Major C—— himself. As he lay gasping for breath, he confessed that he had put the curse of *pishogue* upon Major C—— for his own gain.

It was strange to notice how quickly the family of the once prosperous man sank back into poverty, while my friend regained, bit by bit, what he had lost.

The study, not of curses, but of omens, has always deeply interested me. At one time I used to devote a great deal of time to it, and I have personally known several striking cases of the fulfilment of events presaged by supernatural signs. One above all others is engraved on my memory with poignant vividness—the omen of the crows.

In Ireland, soon after my marriage, I was told of the old belief handed down for generations, and widely credited in the country, that " Leamlara " would never cease to possess an heir so long as the crows remained faithful to the place.

From time immemorial, as ancient documents testified, the owners of "Leamlara" had been proud of the size of their rookeries, which stretched all round the estate. In winter and summer alike, the great army of rooks or—as they are called always in the South of Ireland—"crows" would return home every night to wheel in solemn regular formation three times round the demesne, before settling upon the tree-tops to rest till dawn. Regularly at eventide they came, as surely as night must follow day. And their presence meant that where, for so many centuries, they had wheeled above the woods, an heir must be.

I would often recall the old legend to reassure myself, after the birth of my son Charlie—"Bossie," as he was nicknamed—who, almost before he would walk, could ride, and who, before he had outgrown his old Nanny's care, would terrify her into fits, and make my own heart almost stop beating, by stealing away to climb the tall trees in the avenue to explore the crows' and squirrels' nests. And often when, half distracted, I would discover him perched, a small golden-haired figure in a sailor's suit, amongst the highest branches of some abnormally high beech tree, the old dairymaid would shake her head consolingly. "Don't ye fret, yer Honour," she would say. "The little Masther won't be afther coming to iny harm, for shure, don't the crows come home ivery noight?"

In the days that followed, I tried to comfort myself with the same legend, when huntsmen, coming to the house for refreshment, would tell me of the reckless, fearless riding of my son, leading the field on his beloved cob; or later, when terrified countryfolk would run up to the house with stories of having seen him capless,

standing like an acrobat on the seat of his motor bicycle, as he tore wildly down some perilous hill. And in the winter evenings, as the sky became black with thousands of birds as they circled solemnly three times round the place in perfectly regulated formation before alighting upon the tree-tops, I would tell myself they must always stay.

This thought allayed my indefinite, instinctive dread of approaching tragedy, when I knew my boy had slipped out at dawn to make sure of getting me the first cock or snipe of the season. A crack shot when he was fourteen, he would shoulder his gun with the best, even as an equally fearless and daring swimmer, he was like a fish in water. When his boyish pluck and reckless daring frightened me, I would watch for the home-coming of the crows, whose presence seemed to me the signal of his safety.

But one evening, the crows, who, early in the morning had, as usual, flown away in their well-formed ranks, did not return. . . .

A dead chill hush, like some pall, seemed to settle upon the avenue, and across the woods the silence was unbroken save for the monotonous echo of the water-fall. . . .

Without any apparent reason, the crows had forsaken the old homestead. *Not one came back.* And all around the neighbourhood for miles, the countryfolk looked aghast, and the cold terror of their foreboding gripped my heart as I watched and waited in the vain hope that the birds which had so mysteriously, so silently and utterly passed from sight, would yet return.

Why had they deserted their old homestead? Was it to herald the day that was coming, when the silent woods would echo with the sharp rattle of musketry, as

soldiers fired over their young comrade's grave, and when the hush of the meadows would be broken, not by the ringing notes of the huntsman's horn which my son so loved to sound, but by the throbbing farewell of the Last Post?

Was it because, upon a flower-strewn grave, a regimental wreath would rest with the inscription I cherish now, for him: "Your comrades' tribute to a Brave Soldier"?

Was it because of this, that those thousands of winged creatures had all so suddenly, so mysteriously, broken the record of centuries, and deserted their resting place? The answer is in God's sealed book.

CHAPTER XVI

ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN

NOT the least fascinating part of the practice of clairvoyance is the wonderful and inexhaustible field it affords for the study of the different types of men and women who come to consult me. People of nearly every nationality and creed have at different times asked me to look into my crystal for them, and have helped to enlarge my knowledge of human nature.

One afternoon an old Turkish Princess came to see me. She was the widow of an English officer and was accompanied by a Belgian Countess, whose own rather whimpering manner was in striking contrast to the imperious bearing of the little old lady in her overwhelming *crêpe* and widow's bonnet, shading her snow-white hair. Her hooked nose and large flashing eyes, their brilliance undimmed by age, reminded me of some bird of prey, while her voice, on the other hand, was rich and soft, like the cooing of a dove.

Abruptly the Princess bade the Countess leave the room while she spoke with me, and when the other lady hesitated, she waved her hand with an imperious *hauteur* which would have done credit to an Empress.

With obvious unwillingness, the Countess walked to the door. As she did so, she made a gesture not unlike that of Punch, when he puts his finger to his nose to

Judy, and in a stage whisper remarked, "Inquisitive old cat—wants to poke out all my business. Bah!" Her thin, claw-like fingers with their heavy rings snapped contemptuously behind the Princess's back.

As I peered into the crystal at the old Turkish lady's request, I inclined to excuse the Belgian lady's curiosity, for seldom, if ever, have I seen such a bewildering reflection of strange visions. Harems played an important part in these. The Princess, in fact, was a wonderful old lady, who had been mixed up in countless intrigues, for, and against, her own people. She possessed the cunning of a fox, with the apparent simplicity of a child. At eighty, having full possession of all her faculties, and with more than her share of shrewdness, she was contemplating another marriage!

Small and dapper in their European clothes, two Siamese diplomats, one day, sitting side by side on my divan, armed with large notebooks and pencils, seemed much perturbed when they found I could not read the crystal for both at once, and in the presence of both. What many people do not understand is that the presence of a second person in the room always clouds the glass, and often results in muddled visions due to the intersection, so to speak, of two lives that should have been kept distinct and separate.

A striking contrast to the two Siamese callers was an old Baptist minister, who had come half across England to gain psychic advice on parochial matters, and in the settling of problems connected with the sick and poor of his congregation. A dear kind soul was he, with thick grey socks, and a long white beard, which so enchanted Judy that she sat before him staring with wide open eyes and "singing" with delight.

One specially pitiful case came before me only a few days ago, when, amongst several correspondents asking for appointments one morning, a woman from the country had written : " I have been saving up to be able to come to London, to ask you to look in your crystal for me, and tell me what I want to know." On the day fixed she arrived, a sweet-faced woman, whose large sorrowful eyes and patched shabby black clothes told their own story. " For three years I have been trying to get to you," she said, " but the money was always needed."

Then she explained the reason for her visit. She had lost her three sons in the War. The War Office had told her of the death of two, but the third was still amongst the " Missing." It was because of him she had come—to know if there was any spark of hope that he still lived, a victim, perhaps, to loss of memory, in some foreign land.

" He was my eldest son," she said pitifully. " I can't rest—hoping he may yet come home."

As silence fell between us, I " looked " for her, and told her as gently as I could, what she had felt in her heart. There could be no earthly home-coming for her son.

Later I received from her a shakily written letter. " I cannot thank you too much for what you told me last Saturday, yet I have been at peace since, for now I know, I must not hope."

Clergymen of all denominations have come to me ; I have read the crystal for men and women liberated from gaol ; and once, dumbfounded, I stared into the ball for a distinguished man, only to see the reflection of him as a prisoner, a suspected spy ! I think the

cunning of that man was only equalled by the cruel craftiness I had seen in the life of the Turkish Princess.

From the heart of Dockland a neatly dressed man came to consult me. His life, as it was reflected in the crystal, would have been a wonderful setting for one of Mr. W. B. Maxwell's vivid pen-pictures of "the Under-world." He had worked in stoke-holds all over the world. He had come face to face with dangers and horrors which would have made a volume. When he rose to go, he looked at me shyly. "You have helped me such lots," he said. He paused and twisted his watch-chain awkwardly. "I wish I could do something in return for you." A sudden thought struck him. "I know you are interested in Eastern things," he went on, "and I shall be awfully proud if you will let me take you down east here, and show you a real '*Pukka Poo*.'" He lowered his voice confidentially. "I know a fearful place where you could see the most terrible people. You'll be quite safe with me, Miss, I swear it. I won't let anyone touch you, unless the police *cop us both*!"

It was an invitation made in all sincerity, and it had its tempting side!

A lady-in-waiting to one of our Royal Princesses paced up and down my room. "I have come to you to decide my future," she said. "I want you to look in the crystal and tell me if I can leave my present life and take up my private life far away from here, or if I should remain and still carry out my duty."

I peered into the crystal, and told her what I saw reflected. Her Royal mistress needed her. And, because of that, she gave up all her cherished dreams of retirement, and stayed at her post.

A little Eastern Princess once sat in my room, a bewilderingly beautiful picture in her rich draperies and glittering jewels.

"I want you to look and see," she said, earnestly, "if my great longing and dream will be fulfilled." She glanced towards the door to make sure it was safely closed. Then she leaned nearer. "Will I ever have a lover?" she whispered. "One whom I will love as I want to love? And will I have a child of his?" She clasped her little ring-laden hands. "And will my husband, whom I fear, *never find out*?"

She was so terribly in earnest that I longed to be able to tell her what she wanted so much to know! Alas, it was impossible.

Poor work-worn women, tired out from poverty and ill-health, come to implore a reading in the crystal to see "if there is anything brighter coming some day." How often I have heard that pathetic question from some weary heartsick soul!

Hard, matter-of-fact business men are not ashamed to ask me to give them a crystal reading, to help them with some knotty problem, while authors, and the greater and lesser lights of the theatrical world, continually have recourse to me.

Long ago I saw Lauri de Frece's death reflected in the crystal. The other day, a well-known Member of Parliament said to me, "I am at cross-roads, so have come to you. You told me so correctly all that would happen two years ago, and I want you to tell me now."

After he had left, a 'bus-conductor called to seek my advice. His wife was drinking herself to death, and he had fallen in love with a stewardess on a boat!

A pastrycook, not long ago, told me he and his wife

had come to ask me to decide from the crystal whether they should sell their present business and start a new one in another town; and a dairyman insisted that I could, by looking in the ball, tell him what had killed a certain cow some years previously. He had attributed her disease to foul play, although the Vet ascribed it to natural causes alone !

A young Jewess surprised me the other day. She was a striking-looking, dark-eyed girl, like to many of her race, and seemed talented. Her father was a rabbi of a big synagogue.

"I am an atheist," she told me curtly, as she shook hands. "I don't believe in anything, because of the injustice in the world." Then, to my dismay, she rushed off at a tangent to declaim upon the inequality and misery of life.

Here is a little comedy that will be appreciated by the cynical. A very aristocratic-looking old gentleman, whose name is well-known in racing circles and smart West End clubs, came to see me with his wife. The latter, with much mystery and ceremony, he left in another room, while he confided to me the wonderful love he had for the lady who for forty years had been his partner and whose health had latterly caused him much anxiety. As he talked, now and again brushing away a tear with a large silk handkerchief, ornamented with horses at full gallop, I thought how delightful and touching it was to meet this gallant old gentleman whose one thought was for his beloved wife's health.

In trembling tones he told me how a doctor had warned him that her heart was weak, and that her hold on life was precarious. Choking with suppressed feeling, he exclaimed, "You will forgive my emotion,

when you think what it would mean if I were to lose her—my life's partner "

I felt genuinely sorry for him, and when his wife was at last called up, I was surprised to see an exceedingly fierce-looking old lady, to all appearance extremely robust, whose eyes, I thought, glared rather suspiciously at her devoted husband

Expressing with tender solicitude the hope that she had not found my stirs too trying, the husband withdrew. It was all very affecting, but when I looked into the crystal I gasped. I had seen the reflection of that devoted husband!

When his wife had left me, the white haired old gentleman hurried back. Closing the door carefully behind him, and moving across the room with cat like caution, he stooped over me with an air both mysterious and confidential

"My dear wife is now waiting in the taxi," he said, "but I could not go with her until I had asked you. Can you relieve my anxiety—or must the end be soon—very soon?"

I met his sorrow-shaded eyes and noticed the tremulous excitement of his lips

"What end?" I asked

He sighed deeply. "I feel sure you saw it," he exclaimed. "Only you shrink from telling me." He sighed once more, passionately

"I would rather know the truth. How long will it be before I follow my dear wife, heart-broken with grief, to her last resting place?"

For a moment I did not answer. Then, I smiled into the earnest, anxiety shadowed face

"I can assure you," I comforted him, "I did not see

you following her to her last resting place. She has still a long life before her."

I was ready for an outpouring of outward gratitude—I expected a torrent of thankful ejaculation. I was not prepared for what occurred.

White and pinched-looking, the man leant nearer. "You mean," he exclaimed hoarsely, "that you actually see a long life for my dear, suffering wife?"

I nodded. That, I assured him, was exactly what I did see.

"You do not see her leaving me alone—a widower?" His voice shook with emotion.

I told him the truth. "Her life appeared to run on for many years."

In a moment the sanctimonious anxiety faded from the man's face. His eyes narrowed, and, like one suddenly possessed, he sprang from me to shake his clenched fist in the air.

"It can't be true what you say!" he exclaimed. "No escape? It can't be that I am still to be tied to that old interfering vixen—that mean, bad-tempered woman!" He stopped short, shaking with fury. With an effort, he composed himself and met my astonished eyes.

"My dear wife is a trial at times . . . forget this outburst," he mumbled sheepishly. Muttering to himself, he bowed with as much dignity as he could muster, and left the room. From my window I watched him enter the waiting taxi, and caught sight of an old lady, gesticulating angrily in the direction of the fare metre, and apparently "giving him beans!"

And here, as a pendant to the foregoing, is another little drama—a drama of love, sin, and sorrow.

I think one of the most interesting cases I ever came across was that of a man of about thirty-three, who came to me one day in obvious mental distress.

His wife, to whom, in spite of his inconsistent conduct, he was devotedly attached, was going to divorce him.

When I read the crystal for him, I discovered that this man, a gentleman by birth and education, had done time as a burglar, and had been in prison for misdeeds connected with forging cheques and gambling transactions, but had afterwards distinguished himself in France, turned over a new leaf, and married.

For a time he had kept a good job, and everything had gone well. Then the old craving for other men's belongings had come over him, and he had again been convicted and detained during His Majesty's pleasure.

As if this was not bad enough, his subsequent indiscretions had not been confined to light-fingerwork. He let himself become implicated with a woman of a reputation as doubtful as his own, and the heartbroken girl he had married had started divorce proceedings. Almost on his knees he implored me to tell him if I saw any hope that she would forgive him, and if they would come together again. But I could only tell him I saw the separation by law and a parting for years.

Later, however, there appeared in the crystal a vision of himself and the wife whom he undoubtedly loved, together once more.

Strangely enough the wife herself came to see me not long afterwards. A pretty fair-haired slip of a girl with large blue eyes and a pathetic drooping mouth, she was the daughter of a Colonel, and had married against her family's wishes. Her life, she told me, had been an amazing chaos of wealth one day and poverty the next,

until, little by little, she had discovered that her husband was simply a professional crook.

As soon as her divorce was made absolute, she said, she was going to marry a man who loved her and could offer a home to her and her child. As I looked in the crystal, I saw for her also a vision of the future, which pictured her and the husband she was parting from together again. My visitor clasped her hands, and I saw her lips tremble.

"I shall think of that," she said. "It will help me, for in spite of all I love him."

CHAPTER XVII

SOME QUAIN'T CLIENTS

IN the following narrative I have, for very obvious reasons, altered the names of the places and people concerned. It is a strange story, and its end is still shrouded in uncertainty and mystery.

A couple whom I had met abroad, invited me to stay with them in their beautiful old home. This proved to be an immense house with a historical record, one of the show places of the country, with a park celebrated for the deer which browsed in herds beneath the great beech and oak trees. It wanted nothing to make it perfect, save one thing alone—the patter of baby feet. For although my host and hostess had been married for ten years, the nursery wings were still empty, and Sir Arthur—as I will call him—and his family did not hide their chagrin and disappointment from his wife. Soon after my arrival she confided to me her deep distress. She was a pretty, fair-haired woman of about thirty, and as the days slipped by, we became great friends.

One evening before dinner she came into my room and asked me to read the crystal for her. I noticed that she had been crying.

Taking up the crystal, I looked into it, as we sat before the great log fire which crackled on the open hearth. I saw in the midst of thick mist the figure

of a strange young woman. She was weeping bitterly, and in her arms she held a baby. Her surroundings were poor and squalid . . .

That vision faded, and I saw what appeared to be a hospital ward. . . . In a bed lay the woman who had wept in the squalid room. She was holding out a baby towards another woman, whose arms were outstretched to receive it. Then I started. For now there appeared the figure of a third woman, that of my hostess. She too, stretched out her arms to take the baby.

When I described what I had seen, Lady L——, my companion, started to her feet, and to my amazement, snatched the crystal from me with an exclamation of anger.

"What rubbish your crystal shows," she cried rudely, "I never want to hear of it again. Of course, if I ever have a child, he will be my own, not another woman's." And before I could recover from my surprise, she rushed from the room.

She did not come down to dinner. Her mother-in-law, who was on a visit, sat in her place, and later in the evening confided to me acidly that her daughter-in-law was upset because a doctor had that day told her that he did not think she would ever have a child.

"It is most deplorable for my son," the old lady went on. "Under the circumstances the law should allow him to have another wife."

I did not answer. In my heart I pitied Lady L—— and understood her anger on being told by me that when she held a child in her arms, it would not be her own.

But, apparently, my vision was wrong, utterly wrong. About a year later I read in the paper the announcement that a son had been born to Lady L—— and her husband,

and in answer to my letter of congratulation the latter wrote expressing his unbounded joy at the event, and adding that mother and child were both doing well.

"Such a bonny kid," he wrote, "who can give tongue to beat the band!"

The episode had nearly faded from my mind, when one day, it was most strangely recalled.

My secretary had answered a letter from a poor woman, begging that I would grant her an interview, and had arranged for me to see her.

She proved to be a young woman, not much more than a girl and pretty in a way, but her face was marked with the unmistakable stamp of the life she was leading. I had no need to look into the crystal to discern her profession.

She had made a War marriage; her husband had been killed soon afterwards, and she had been left to face the future without sufficient means to keep herself in comfort until the coming of her child. She told me that she had lost the child. As I naturally supposed that she meant it was dead, I was very much surprised by what I saw when I looked into the crystal.

Out of a dark cloudy mist there appeared, quite distinctly, the figure and face of Lady L——. In her arms she held a child, which I knew must be that of the woman beside me. What could it mean?

I peered perplexedly into my crystal, listening at the same time to the voice of my visitor. "In the hospital, the matron took my baby," she said, "I was deuced lucky to have him adopted. I don't know who has him," she went on, "but I want you to help me to find him."

"Why?" I asked her.

She tossed her head with the tawdry hat. "They didn't give me enough splosh, I reckon," she said. "I want to squeeze more out of them. I don't want the little blighter. I ain't got no time for babies. Only I want more splosh."

I averted my eyes. "But you got what you asked in the first place?" I queried with forced carelessness.

She noisily began to suck liquorice lozenges.

"I got more than I expected," she answered rather grudgingly, "but it ought to have been a bigger sum still. He was a healthy kid all right."

I repressed a shudder. I had never heard anything so cold-blooded as this woman talking of her child as though he was just so much marketable value.

I stared keenly at her.

"You don't want to find your son because you wish to see him or get him back?" I asked. "You want to find where he is, to extort more money for him?"

She nodded. "You've got the idea," she said. "I want more splosh."

It was easy to see what sort the girl was.

I shook my head and told her I could not help her. After she had gone, noisily proclaiming her disappointment, my thoughts flew to a quiet room in which a beautifully gowned woman had sat, and had snatched the crystal from my hands. It seemed incredible that the child of the woman who had just left me, was the long-talked-of heir to that ancient estate. How could the story end?

Several times in the months which followed I asked myself that question, but I could not interfere. What I had seen was the secret of others. I could not speak

of it to the world. The next development was a letter from Lady L——, in which she begged me to go and see her. She was in trouble and needed my help—urgently. The nature of her trouble she did not mention.

A week later, as I sat beside her bed, she told me. She was an expectant mother. In spite of myself I gave a start and glanced at the photograph of a baby on the mantelpiece. Following the direction of my eyes, her face grew pale.

But it was not until late that night that she told me of how she had managed to deceive her husband, and, for her own peace with his family, had brought a child back from a nursing home and passed him off as her own baby. The thought that she had wronged her own unborn child was nearly driving her demented, but she would not hear of confessing her deception to her husband. "You know something of all this," she said, "I realized that you saw it that night in the crystal, so I had to send for you, to talk it over."

But I could do little to help her, I could only listen in silence to her feverish confidence.

After the birth of her own son, the rightful heir to the property of which a strange woman's child was the acknowledged successor, she told me that some day she would take her courage in both hands, and tell her husband what she had done. Up till now, she has held her peace. But I know she will not keep her secret long. Mother-love is very strong in her, and with her own baby's hands tugging at her heart, she will speak out.

Whatever happens, the son of the woman who came to my house in London will not want.

A rather unique experience occurred one day, when a certain Major —— came to see me by appointment. He was reserved almost to brusquerie when he arrived. "I will tell you absolutely nothing," he announced. "So I shall be grateful if you will tell me all you see in the crystal." I am quite accustomed to preambles of this sort, and paid no attention, merely giving him the crystal to hold. When he had held it for a few minutes and placed it back on the cushion, I saw the reflection of a young, extremely attractive woman. When I described her, the major nodded his head. Not waiting for him to make any remarks I went on to describe the ensuing visions.

Beside the woman, I saw her husband, my visitor, and was in no doubt as to his devotion to her. Then there appeared the figure of another man, indistinct at first, but growing clearer, until, with a start, I recognized the familiar face of a kinsman of my own, the heir to a peerage, who rather posed as a first-class prig !

What on earth, I asked myself, was he doing there with this woman? For now I saw her turning her back on her husband and holding out her arms to the other. For a moment the crystal clouded, but when I looked again, I saw that the major had a riding crop in his hand. . . . As far as I could ascertain, the background was a dark passage at night. . . . Once again I saw my relative, but dishevelled and nonplussed, and in a moment there followed a violent struggle between the two men. Once I saw the flash of a woman's white face, her eyes wide with terror, her hands outstretched as if in appeal. A moment later the vision faded.

When I had described what I had seen, my visitor uttered an exclamation. "You have told me what actually occurred," he said. "I came home from abroad to find my wife was away, staying with friends. I went there, and caught her with her lover." He ground his teeth. "I horse-whipped him, and there¹ was a scandal. . . . I have a letter here which he wrote to my wife," he went on after a pause. "Will you read it?"

As he held the letter out to me I recognized the familiar writing of my relative, who, by the way, was engaged to a charming girl of my acquaintance. After effusive expressions of passionate affection, the writer went on to affirm that he had long ago ceased to care for his *fiancée*, but that, for appearance, he had put in just a day with her before going abroad. "You know," he continued, "I worship you only, and count the hours till you are freed from that boor."

"She will be free soon," my visitor remarked grimly. "I have started divorce proceedings to-day."

"That man will never marry her!" I exclaimed with impulsive vehemence. "I know that. His family would disinherit him if they knew."

The Major stared at me in amazement. "His family?" he exclaimed. "How do you know?"

The Major had shown me a photograph of my cousin, which had been in the possession of his wife and bore the inscription, "Yours till death." Taking up an album, I turned the pages until I came to its duplicate. The Major was speechless. "The man who ruined your wife is my relative," I said.

Another rather surprising, but immensely amusing incident happened when I heard my own history re-

counted with more or less veracity to me by a relation-in-law who had no idea whatever of my identity.

A rather pompous elderly woman, Lady G——, was ushered into my room one day, and told me she had come to obtain advice on an important matter.

As I looked into the crystal and told her all I saw, she thawed visibly and rapidly, assuring me I had told her the past as if I had known her all her life.

The required advice obtained, she remained chatting, and by chance the conversation turned to a certain place in Ireland, where, she said, she had first met the husband who had been the "alpha and omega of her trouble." I asked her if she had any relations in the "distressful country," and she told me her husband had one. She then mentioned the name of my own husband! I contented myself with remarking that I had heard his name. "Oh yes," she exclaimed, "his family is well-known." "I think I heard he is married?" I hazarded.

She made an expressive gesture. "Oh dear, yes, he married a girl from school, wild as a March hare, I believe, who had run away from a convent to be a barmaid and a stewardess on a tramp steamer. Quite an artistic girl, I believe, though," she went on. "Oh dear, yes, she was friends with everything in khaki in the country, from a drummer to a General. Oh dear me, yes, and always sang for the Blue Jackets' Concerts and chewed, so I was told, plug tobacco!!!"

She stopped short, startled by the smothered shriek of merriment which, in spite of my strenuous efforts to restrain it, escaped me.

"*Chewed plug tobacco*," I managed to gasp. "What a horrible woman!"

My visitor shook her head "I don't think she was horrible, though of course I don't know, because I never saw her She left Ireland years ago, oh yes!"

"But," I exclaimed, "what became of this plug chewing person?"

Lady G—— shrugged her shoulders

"I don't really know The last, I believe, that was heard of her was that she was selling bootlaces outside the Palace Theatre Oh dear, yes, or was it violets? I have forgotten which Yes, I think it was bootlaces!"

Then dismissing the subject of her husband's cousin's wife from her mind, my visitor rose, and after a quite gushing farewell, sailed majestically from the room, leaving me alone to digest the knowledge of my unsuspected accomplishment—*chewing of plug tobacco!*

Sometimes, I can't help feeling saddened and depressed when, one after another, men and women come to me under a cloud of sorrow or trouble But again, there are days when it is difficult not to laugh outright at the amazingly ludicrous things which happen

One day the door flew open to admit a grey haired gentleman with a moustache which would have done credit to "Old Bill" himself He had one of the queerest peculiarities of speech I have ever heard, using the letter "s" as if it were a "t" "I tee tubtonsciously," he informed me "I tat up in bed latt night and pictured you to mytelf" He glanced round my room curiously "I taw your tofa in another place, but you had dark brown hair" He put on a large pair of horn spectacles and eyed me attentively "I tee your hair // dark, to my tubtonscious picture wat torrect, tuite torrect"

He then went on to inform me that he had travelled from a secluded town in Cornwall to ask me to look in the crystal and see if there was anything worth digging up beneath a yew tree in his garden. His wife had forbidden excavations, he said, but he had dreamt that a jewel box containing coins was buried there. My seriousness nearly collapsed when he produced from his pocket a twig of yew, which he insisted I should lay upon my crystal, to see if his dream warranted his defiance of his wife's instructions to leave the garden unmolested ; which, by the way, I advised him to do, as my crystal did not show me any vision of the treasure !

This personage was no funnier than a young woman who came from the Shires with a basket in which she had carried a prize-bred hen. The creature would not lay, she complained. There must be a curse upon her. So she was sure that I, "being clairvoyante-like," could tell her what ailed the bird "to be that unnatural !"

Before I could stop her, she had hauled the protesting fowl from its basket, to fly, cackling and terrified, all round the room !

"I've been married this twelve years," a woman once told me, when she came for a consultation, "and I've got no family, so I've lost patience with my husband, and told him I'd come right off to Miss Montague, who was no fool, and would make things come right with her crystal-gazing !"

At any rate, if she accredited my clairvoyance with a power luckily not generally attributed to it, she was well meaning and harmless—unlike the lady who once came to seek my aid in a matrimonial difficulty.

"I married a scamp fifteen years ago," she informed me, "and as I'm sick of him"—she lowered her voice—

"I thought that perhaps you might be able to tell me how I could get rid of him quickly without anyone finding out, as all the poisons I know of are too risky." She paused, and pursed her lips. "And he's not worth hanging for !"

I think the worthy lady left my house rather more depressed than she had entered it. Certainly I did my best to convince her that murder and clairvoyance do not necessarily go hand in hand !

CHAPTER XVIII,

IN THE OLD CASTLE

NEARLY always when entering any house or other building for the first time, I am conscious of a sense of either good or ill. Every house has its own atmosphere, and it is remarkable what a difference may be between two houses, of which the outward aspects are exactly the same.

Some great deed done centuries ago will fill a building with its beneficent influence just as the horror of a long-forgotten tragedy will pervade the environment with an inexplicable gloom, or, to use the expressive French word, *malaise*.

This was brought home to me very vividly some years ago.

I was arranging a theatrical entertainment for the Red Cross, in the barracks of a certain regiment, and after a rehearsal, the Adjutant asked his wife and myself, with some of the cast, to tea in his room.

It was a long cheery room, overlooking the barrack square, but although the sun was shining through the windows, and the interior had obviously been repainted quite lately, I was conscious, the moment I entered, of a vague sensation of gloom. As I took the chair our host gave me, I felt a cold shiver, and a dread—of I knew not what.

All through tea I felt the same sensation and I made up my mind to leave as soon as I possibly could.

One of the subalterns had put a rag-time on the new gramophone, of which the Adjutant was very proud, and he and the C.O.'s wife were trying a few steps up and down the room. Suddenly I was surprised to see a young man sitting on the window seat, his head leaning on his hands, and apparently unconscious of the presence of the rest of us. I wondered how he could have come in without our knowledge, for it was evident that no one else had noticed his entry. He must belong to one of the other regiments quartered in the Southern Command, I thought, for he was in uniform.

For a few moments I said nothing. Then as no one *paid any heed to him, and the Adjutant, his impromptu* dance finished, came up to me, I touched his arm and made a sign to show him that a new guest had arrived whom he had not yet welcomed. He looked at me in surprise. "What is it?" he asked.

"That man in the window," I said in a low voice. "You haven't given him any tea."

He looked towards the window, and his face changed. "What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "There isn't any man." I turned upon him a look of blank amazement. Was he blind, or bereft of his senses? The man was there in front of his eyes.

"Don't be silly!" I tried to laugh, but I was conscious anew of the chill I had experienced on entering the room.

"You must see him?" I exclaimed.

"What is he like?" The adjutant spoke very quietly, but as he gazed at the window he wore a strained and apprehensive expression.

And then as I too turned towards the window again I saw that the stranger was no longer there! I looked

round the room. There was no sign of him. Yet the closed door had not been opened for his exit !

Our host sat down beside me. " You have seen him too ! " he exclaimed.

With a swift movement, he rolled up the rug at my feet and pointed to a dark stain on the white boards. " It was on that spot that a poor chap stationed here shot himself. The stain has never been got off." He paused. " Lots of fellows won't have this room, because they declare they see him."

He rose and lit a cigarette. " I haven't seen him. I have *never* seen him, and don't mind if I do. ' Spirits don't worry me.' "

I had been in other rooms in the barracks, but it was only there, in that newly painted room, with the leopard-skin rugs, that I felt that sensation of gloom and dread. It was as if the despair and mental suffering which had driven a poor young officer to take his life still remained, long years after the fatal deed.

Once, when staying at Knoppogue Castle, in County Clare, in the late Lord Dunboyne's lifetime, Lady Dunboyne asked me to read my crystal in the demesne. When I did so, the crystal turned a dark crimson. It was before the rebellions, so I was not prepared for what I saw. Afterwards I learned that a man had been done to death near the spot on which we were standing and had been buried under a neighbouring wall.

It is very seldom that I look into the crystal when alone. Only on two occasions have I ever looked *for myself*, for I have never forgotten my old ayah's warning, " Baby Memsahib, look in the heart of the crystal for others—never read destiny for yourself."

Perhaps she specially wished to keep me from seeing what was to come into my own life. She herself had often looked for me, but she never told me what she saw ; only, she would catch me in her arms and kiss me and hold me to her, as if she wanted to ward off some menace or harm. I have often wondered what she saw with those wonderful liquid eyes of hers.

Once, while I was sitting writing letters in my boudoir at "Leamlara," a sudden longing to look into my crystal prompted me to pick it up from the table and peer into its depths. I did not really wish to read anything about my own life, yet the impulse was so strong as to make me forget my ayah's words.

At first, I could discern nothing. Presently, however, I saw, to my surprise, what appeared to be a wide expanse of sea. Next moment I was filled with horror, for on the surface of that sea I saw struggling human forms. . . . Then the vision was lost in a mist, out of which human hands appeared beckoning. What could it mean ? I asked myself. Was I going to be drowned ? Rather fearful of seeing more, I put away the crystal, and tried to forget what I had seen.

Later in the day I got a telegram, asking me to go to Queenstown at once. The "Lusitania" had been torpedoed, and help was wanted at Admiralty House for the survivors. So my vision had not been a warning of my own fate, but a presage of the death of those hundreds of men, women and children whom a German torpedo had sent to their doom.

As I went from room to room in Admiralty House, trying to help some of the poor rescued, and stood on the quay where every available building and shed was piled up with the dead, I saw again, in fancy, the outstretched

beckoning hands reflected in my ball. It seemed as if the heartrending cries of drowning mothers, clasping their little children in their arms, had found an echo in my crystal.

Holding one sobbing child in my arms, I tried to soothe her pitiful cries for the poor dead mother she would never see again. She had reached the shores of the long talked of "home," only to find herself friendless and utterly alone. And because the thought came to me that the outstretched hands had been those of the murdered mother, craving pity for her child, I decided to take her to bring up with my own. Days later, however, a distant relative claimed her from me, and took her away.

This incident is a strange instance of atmospheric influences from miles away affecting a crystal vision. There was no explanation, such as the tie of blood. I had no relative or near friend on board the ill-fated ship—only acquaintances, who, in their agony, would not have thought of me. The vision was in no way the result of some close bond existing between me and one or more of the victims. It was absolutely and entirely due to the horror and anguish which rent the atmosphere around.

Once, when I read the crystal at a charity fête held at Castle Barnard, the late Lord Bandon's seat in County Cork, I was puzzled by the repeated appearance of a heap of blackened walls and ruins where the castle stood. Over and over again as I looked, I saw the same vision. At last I described what I had seen to Colonel East, the Officer Commanding Number 12 District.

Long afterwards, as he and I discussed the wanton burning, by rebels, of Castle Barnard, my vision returned in detail to my mind.

Apropos of castles, on the only two occasions on which I did consult the crystal actually for myself, I saw, both times, a ruined tower, and the picture of a great danger to my own life. One of the visions was connected with a love affair, which began as a harmless *pour s'amuser* on both sides, and deepened upon that of my *vis-à-vis* into something stronger. He was a man who had lived most of his life abroad, and was of the primitive world. He would be catalogued as a specimen of splendid manhood. We had a lot in common, but I don't suppose I realized how things were drifting, until one day he suddenly dispelled all my ideas of platonic friendship by asking me—as I hadn't wings to fly with him—to do the next best thing, and catch the boat and elope! As I did not see eye to eye with him in this small matter, he sulked, but later he patched up the rift and appeared to have philosophically forgotten the incident.

One night, sitting beside my open window, I suddenly thought I would forget my ayah's prayer, and look into the crystal for myself.

Gradually there formed out of the darkness a large castellated tower, part of a ruined castle. I saw an uneven stairway leading to the top, where stood the figure of a woman. As she turned towards me, I knew I was looking into my own face! The next moment a man climbed the staircase, and I saw Robert D——. Almost immediately the vision began to fade into a thick mist, but not before I had seen the man spring forward and push the woman towards the edge of the tower, from which there was a huge drop on to the rocks below. Shuddering, I looked away from the ball.

It was surprising how much the vision affected me, but it was strangely vivid and lifelike. It was, more-

over, one of the few times on which, feeling curiously detached, I had seen myself like some being apart.

The weeks lengthened into months, and Robert—— never again referred to the subject of eloping. At last he came to say good-bye, as he was returning to South Africa.

I was on a week's visit to friends in the country, and in the afternoon, as all the party were going out with the guns, I, being no sportswoman, declared my intention of walking over to the neighbouring village to buy some picture postcards of the views.

"Be sure you stop and look over the old castle," my hostess said. "It is one of the finest ruins of the county."

It was a bleak cold day, and as I walked along smartly towards the village, I paused before the tower my hostess had urged me to see. It was a round tower, a wonderfully perfect specimen. Ruined castles always fascinate me, and it was not long before I was climbing the winding stairs leading to the open top. As I went, loose stones would roll away from my feet. I could hear the monotonous drip, drip of the water from the walls, while the smell of decaying leaves was in my nostrils. At last, a trifle breathless, I reached the top, and stood, the cold wind stinging my cheeks, to gaze across the far-stretching country below. A faint glimmer of sunset alone broke the sombreness of the autumn afternoon. Leaning against the old stonework, I pictured dreamily the history of some of those who, centuries ago, had lived in the isolated silent ruin, now the resting place of rats and owls. All at once I thought I heard a footfall on the stairs behind me. I glanced over my shoulder, but saw nothing, so I thought it must have been rats, and shivered.

Once again I looked behind me—this time to start in amazement. Across the top of the tower, Robert D—— was coming towards me.

How had he got there? I had believed him on the high seas on his way to Africa.

"I couldn't go without seeing you," he said as he reached me. He spoke breathlessly, as if he had been running. "I found out you were at Kentmoor House, so I went there, and the servants told me you had come on here." He laughed, and the sound of his laugh as it echoed amongst the ruins chilled me with sudden terror.

His hands snatched at my arm. "Did you think, when it came to the point, that I would really go?" he asked. His face was deadly pale, and I saw a wild light in his eyes.

"I won't go unless you come with me. I have come back to take you away from all this, by one means or the other."

Tongue-tied, I stared at him, petrified with forbodings, as a sudden memory surged back upon me. I seemed to see again a crystal vision. I saw myself reflected in its depths. Right on the edge of a tower, even as I now stood, I had seen myself before—*with him*.

The remembrance nearly broke down my self-control.

"Let me go," I said. "You have no right to follow me here."

"You won't come away with me?" he asked, his eyes blazing into mine. "I can't live without you—I won't!" He caught me, in spite of my efforts to escape, and dragged me, nearer, nearer, the edge of the crumbling tower.

I started back, as his hold tightened on my shoulders, and struggled desperately.

“I would rather see you dead than leave you.”

So near indeed was death that my foot was touching the edge of the tower. Twisting suddenly, I caught frantically at his clothes. Taken off his guard, he started back, and, striking his foot against a projecting stone, stumbled. The movement jerked me forward, right forward. . . . Screaming, I tried to cling closer, but my foot slipped, and losing my balance, I pitched away from him, down, down.

In a sickening flash, I saw the grey, grass-tufted walls. I remember a white bird flew out before my face. It seemed that I was falling for an eternity. . . . As in a dream I heard the echo of a man's voice shouting madly. . . . Then there came a horrible thump, and I was conscious of a throbbing pain as I crushed heavily on what I afterwards heard was a projecting ivy-covered buttress. I knew no more until, late at night, a search party, which, frightened at my non-return, had come out to look for me, found me lying there. Whether Robert had meant really to “do me in,” and the sight of me falling to my apparent death had scared him back to reason, or whether he had only meant to frighten me, and by accident pushed me when he slipped, I do not know. I never heard from him again. Too terrified to look down after he had pushed me to what he imagined had been my doom, he had fled from the lonely castle.

It was many months afterwards, when he came out of a nursing home in South Africa, that he learned from a chance letter that his fit of momentary madness had not, after all, cost me my life. I never saw him again !

It is, to me, a fascinating sensation to see in the crystal incidents in the lives of famous men and women of to-day, and many sensational cases about which it interests us to read in the press have thrilled me with deep emotion, when I have actually seen them reflected in the ball

Many people thronged to hear Rosita Forbes lecture on her interesting travels, but I had the delight of watching, spellbound, her journeys and the events of her life, reflected in the crystal, as she sat beside me. And when, all over the world, people spoke of Christabel Russell, who fought so pluckily for her son, I saw her visions in the ball

Far more harrowing than any newspaper report, no matter how startling and glaring the headlines, were the visions which I saw for a beautiful woman, whose case was to be the sensation of the year, when her husband shot her lover and was exonerated for the deed

As I took the crystal from her thin, well shaped hands, I nearly dropped it at the visions which formed and faded before my horrified gaze

Later, when newsboys shrieked the headlines, " Officer shoots wife's lover," I read the details of what I had already seen

CHAPTER XIX

FROM NUN TO WIFE

FROM 1915 to 1923 is a long time to elapse between a vision and its fulfilment. I make this reflection as I recall the following romantic history.

One of the officers of a regiment stationed some years ago in the South of Ireland was married to an extremely beautiful Chilian girl. She dressed in the latest of French *chic*, and was looked at askance by the other ladies of the regiment. She soon became notorious in the neighbourhood for her numerous and outrageous flirtations.

Her husband, at first, did not seem to pay any attention to the rumours of his wife's intrigues. So, with the usual cattiness of provincial busybodies, people deemed it their duty to warn him that the lady was straying far from the path of Cæsar's wife !

Not long after her arrival in the neighbourhood, she came to me at a fête, when I was reading the crystal for some charity, and asked me to look in it for her destiny. I may say that I had never seen her before, and had no idea who she was. When I looked into the crystal, I saw a swiftly oncoming divorce, and as scene after scene appeared, and I described them, she exclaimed that I was wonderful. I told her, she said, things which no one but she herself knew.

When I warned her of her approaching divorce, she

asked me to describe her husband, and when I told her I saw a rather small man with a fair moustache, riding a grey horse, she said I had described him

"I don't want him to divorce me," she objected, "not unless I find someone rich enough to pay my bills"

I did not answer I was engrossed by a new scene which was forming before my eyes The husband whom I had described stood with his arms outheld to a fair, blue-eyed young woman, dressed in a nun's habit In spite of the figures of other women in nun's dress, who seemed to bar her way, I saw her stepping towards him, as if heedless or unconscious of the influences of those who would hold her back

What on earth could it mean? I asked myself in perplexity Surely, the husband of the woman before me would not eventually marry a nun?

For some time afterwards, I did not hear any more of the beautiful Chilian, and then rumours were again rife Her husband had returned from France, and had found his wife so flagrantly setting at naught all discretion in her love affairs that he had no option but to divorce her

The case created a great deal of interest, as the Major and his wife were well known and had a large circle of friends

The whole affair faded from my mind, however, until some years afterwards I happened to be lunching with the husband's mother, and met the man himself Rather diffidently, he asked me to look into the crystal for him, although he said that he felt life offered him little promise of happiness His divorce, with all its attendant disillusionment and financial loss, for his

wife had run him into overwhelming debt, seemed to have crushed him.

When the mist in the crystal cleared and a vision formed, I saw to my astonishment the figure of a girl, who, dressed in a nun's habit, stretched out her hands to a man whom I recognized as Major S——. I saw her clinging to him, in spite of the upraised horrified hands of those who thronged around her, trying to separate her from him.

The vision faded, and there came in its place the reflection of the same girl, a wedding ring on her left hand.

I told Major S—— that I saw his marriage in the immediate future with a fair-haired girl, who had been a nun. Naturally, he was incredulous. It seemed a most unlikely story. Except in novels, one seldom meets blue-eyed brides who exchange the black veil for the white.

When I reached home that evening, a lady, the wife of a celebrated artist, called, bringing her sister. The latter I had never seen before, and, indeed, I had not even been aware of her existence.

The moment I looked at her, I uttered an exclamation. I recognized her! She was the girl whose face I had seen in my crystal earlier that day.

Rather shyly, she told me she wanted me to look in my crystal for her, as she was in trouble, not knowing what to do. When I was left alone with her, I saw a bewildering rush of contradictory pictures. I saw the girl beside me, wearing the veil and habit of a nun. The next moment I saw her a wife. Then there distinctly formed the face and figure of her future husband, Major S——! Thoroughly intrigued, I told

her I had seen her in a nun's habit, and described a vision of herself, crouching in an attitude of despair, her face buried in her hands.

"You have been—in fact, are, a nun," I said.

With a start she sprang to her feet.

"Oh, it is impossible that you should see that," she cried. "My sister must have betrayed me!"

I shook my head, assuring her that her sister had not even mentioned her existence to me. Then I told her of the other visions, in which I had seen her married. She repeated, "Impossible!" and told me that she was going back to the convent to take her final vows. She had been in the convent for some years, but, owing to the war, had not yet taken them. Her loneliness and unhappiness there had tempted her to come out into the world again. But, for many reasons, she had found no happiness, and her immediate return to the nunnery *for life* had been arranged. I begged her not to enter the cloisters just because she was lonely. I assured her I saw happiness coming, and because she interested me so much, arousing my heartfelt sympathy, I asked her to stay with me, at least for a few days, and enjoy a little fling of life before making her final decision. She accepted gladly, and the following day arrived on her visit. That evening, both she and Major S—— were guests at a small dance at my house. And so they met!

Three weeks afterwards they came to find me, to tell me that the vision in the crystal had been verified. They were going to be married at once.

It was strange that the beginning of the tragedy which I had seen in Major S——'s life, when I looked in the crystal for his first wife, should, years later, find its

sequel in my own house, where I saw the tragedy end in one of the most romantic love affairs possible.

And the day on which the girl stood before the altar, a radiantly happy bride, was the very day on which she was to have renounced for ever, before another altar, all worldly love !

A love drama which had no such happy ending was enacted soon after. A handsome woman of forty came to consult me. She looked ten years younger than her actual age, and possessed, besides an attractive appearance, a singularly fascinating manner. Without any hesitation, she told me she was in a quandary. She was about to remarry, but was uncertain as to which of two eligible suitors she should accept.

"They are both exceedingly well off," she explained. "Money with me is a minor consideration, as I was left quite independent by my husband, a wealthy goldmine owner ; but I have heard so much about you that I want you to advise me now. Which of the two men should I marry ?"

She seemed very much in earnest, and went on to tell me that her relatives were very much adverse to her marriage. They found her income much too convenient !

After I had looked into the crystal for her, I hesitated. I really did not like to have to tell her what I saw.

"Which of the two must I marry ?" she asked eagerly, "I promised each to let him have his answer to-morrow."

I screwed up my courage to break the result of the vision to her. "You will not marry either of these men," I said. Her eyes widened in the greatest astonishment

"Surely," she exclaimed, "you can't mean I shall

never meet another man whom I shall like better than either of them ? ”

“ No,” I answered. “ I mean that you are not a widow. You are not free ! ”

“ What you say is impossible,” she cried. “ My husband was killed a year ago.”

I shook my head, my eyes glued on the crystal, as I described to her a tall bearded man, dressed in white, whom I saw leaning against a palm tree.

“ Is there any particular peculiarity about him ? ” my visitor asked, unsteadily.

I peered closer, taking in every detail of the rather shrunken figure.

“ The neck of his shirt is open,” I said, “ and on his chest there is tattooed a hawk, with some letters beneath it.”

She uttered a cry. “ My husband had a hawk tattooed on his chest,” she exclaimed ; “ but it can’t be true that he is alive now. I had every proof sent to me of his death. He was killed out lion-shooting in Africa.”

I did not speak, and she started up, her face pale and haggard, her eyes shining with sudden fear.

“ It cannot be true what you say—that after all this time he is coming back from the grave to dog me, and stand between me and happiness, as he has done for so long.”

Her distress was so genuine that I felt the deepest sympathy with her, for the crystal had reflected something of what her life had been with him.

“ Please look again,” she pleaded. “ What you saw must have been the past. Tell me something of the future—of my life with one of these two men who love me ? ”

I did as she asked me, although I knew in my own heart I was not mistaken. Again I saw the reflection of a rather bent, wan man. His face was thin and gaunt, and there was an ugly scar above his right temple.

"I am sorry," I told her, "to distress you, but your husband is alive somewhere, in some distant country." Then I described a straw-roofed building, around which dark figures moved. My visitor again uttered a sharp cry. "I wish I had not come to you," she said. "You have upset me horribly. But I know you are wrong, quite wrong. I shall marry one of the two men who care for me !"

Then she hesitated, evidently afraid that she had hurt my feelings by her outburst.

"I feel you saw something of my unhappy married life," she said, "but I want to tell you I married my husband when I was in my 'teens, and from the first it was a terrible mistake. My relatives had engineered it, because of his wealth, but, from the day of my marriage until that on which I received the cable announcing his death, I never knew any peace." She paused. "I wish no one harm, but"—her face was very white—"I trust that what you see is not right. That would be more than I could bear."

The next moment she had gone.

I hardly expected to hear from her again. But, to my surprise, a few days later she came hurriedly into my room, and one glance at her face told me some tragedy had befallen her. "You were right, damnedly right," she cried. "News has reached me that my husband, who was supposed to have been mauled to death in Central Africa by a lion, was picked up unconscious by natives." She stopped short, and her fingers

clutched at the table for support. "You were correct in saying I am not free."

Her face twitched with emotion, as her voice rose shrilly : "My husband is an inmate of a lunatic asylum in Africa."

A rather strange example of a mirror vision, connected with Africa, occurred some time ago, when a cousin brought to my house a Resident Magistrate from the West Coast. He was a man of about thirty-five, and had seen a lot of active service in the War.

"I don't believe one bit in crystal gazing, or anything else of the sort," he said, "but I just thought I would come and see if you could shake my disbelief." He laughed. "If you can tell me of any particular incident in my life, on which I will concentrate, I will be convinced."

I asked him if he would like me to read the crystal for him, or try by a mirror vision, and as he said he had never heard of the latter, he chose it for the experiment.

Always, I find, when reading a mirror, it is necessary, to obtain a clear vision, to hold the hand of the person for whom I look, as there must be some physical contact. In crystal gazing, however, it is only necessary that the individual for whom I gaze should hold the ball for a few minutes before placing it on the cushion.

Sending my cousin out of the room, I asked his friend to sit with me before a long cheval mirror. When we were thus seated, I held his left hand in my left, and stared steadily into the glass, while he promised to concentrate upon some particular thing.

After a little the mirror itself seemed to disappear in a black vapoury mist, and, when it cleared, I saw the reflection of what appeared to be the interior of a wooden

hut. On a chair, in his shirt sleeves, his face half hidden by a beard, leant a man whom I recognized as my companion. But what arrested my attention was the grey hen he was holding in his arms. Caressing her plumage, he laid his cheek against her wings.

Speaking slowly, I described the scene.

“By Gad !” The exclamation startled me, and I felt his hand tremble. “It is incredible ! You have described Trilby, the one creature above all others, that I loved out there—my pet hen.”

“Your pet hen !” I exclaimed. It seemed such a strange pet for the big bronzed man beside me.

He nodded. “She was as faithful as any dog,” he went on. “She never left me until she died of old age.”

He paused, and then added, “I thought of her, because I knew you could not possibly have heard about her !” For a moment he was silent, as if thinking deeply. Then he said, “Please let me try once again. If you are right this time, I am convinced.”

Once more I gazed into the mirror. For a time I could see nothing but our own reflection. But slowly a blurred mist hid us from my eyes, and I found myself looking at what seemed like the interior of a hospital ward. There were several beds, all covered with cotton quilts of a crushed-strawberry colour.

In one bed I saw the man who sat beside me. He was holding his hands over his eyes, as if to shut out the sight of the man in the bed next to him, who writhed in contortions of agony, and on whose face was stamped the seal of approaching death. Near him stood a coloured orderly dressed in white.

As I described the vision, the man sprang up.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I would not have believed it possible"

Then, as I looked enquiringly at him, he told me that I had described the interior of a missionary hospital in Central Africa, where he had been taken after a bad accident, and where each bed was covered with a strangely-coloured cotton bedspread "The only hospital I have ever seen with bedspreads that colour," commented my visitor "You were absolutely right," he went on, "when you described the man dying in the bed next to me His sufferings were so awful that I did hide my eyes, not to see him" He paused "I was thinking of that very scene as we sat there, now"

It was a strange example of the vividness and accuracy of visions in a mirror Personally, it does not matter to me if I use a crystal or a mirror, except that the former is more convenient, and visions appear without my having to hold the hand of the person for whom I look

People often seem to think that, to procure a vivid crystal vision, the ball must be pure crystal, and must be round This is a mistake Any ball of solid glass is just as good, while a solid lump of glass of any shape can be used if a ball is not procurable The crystal, or the glass, is really only a means for concentration

At one time I used to see visions without using any medium, until the strain affected my heart, and the doctors forbade it By using the medium of a crystal, a mirror, or any other aid to concentration, one suffers far less strain and mental fatigue

CHAPTER XX

THE "IDEAL HOME"

A STRANGE incident, due to a letter from India asking for a crystal vision, was instrumental in ferreting out an amazing and horrible wrong.

A lady wrote from a hill station in India, begging me to put her letter on my crystal, and write and tell her whatever I could see. She enclosed a neatly written letter in a childish handwriting, and asked me if I would also look for the writer, her little son, who was at school in England.

I did as she asked me with her own letter, and carefully wrote down all I saw. Then I placed the other letter round the ball, and left it there for at least a quarter-of-an-hour. When I took it away and looked into the crystal, I was startled by the apparition out of the shadowy mist which always obscures the ball before a vision, of a face which is vivid in my mind to-day.

It was that of a gaunt cadaverous-looking man of about forty-five. His eyes, his whole features, seemed full of craft and cruelty, and his thin lips twitched as if with overwhelming rage. As the vision of the face faded, I wondered what connection the man I had seen could have with the little writer. Then I looked again. I saw the reflection of the same face, and noticed that the man wore the high collar of a clergyman.

I could see nothing but that evil threatening face and the sullen, rather hollow eyes. Later in the evening, I saw an indistinct reflection of three boys, huddled together in what appeared to be a bare room. Their whole attitude was one of fear. Just as this picture faded into darkness, I saw the outline of the face I had seen twice before.

I realized how disappointed the mother of the writer would be when I wrote and told her that I had been able to see nothing concerning her boy except a vision of a vile-looking man, in clergyman's clothes, and the picture of three terrified boys cowering together. It all seemed to have a sinister foreboding of trouble. But I could not explain it.

In due course I received a letter from my correspondent. "All you wrote to me in connection with my own letter about the past is absolutely true," she wrote; "but I do not understand anything from what you say in connection with my son's letter. I am sure he does not know such a man as you describe. He is at a small private school, kept by a dear kind clergyman, who devotes his life to making a home for lonely boys whose parents and relatives are in India or abroad, and each mail we get letters full of praise of the school, and of the kindness of his Master, from our boy. Who the frightened boys are, I cannot imagine. The boys at the school, I hear, treat the Master as a 'big brother'.

I myself have never seen him, as we heard of the school from friends. But I am hoping to meet him now that we are looking forward to coming home."

She did not, however, come home as soon as she expected. The War stopped her. She wrote once or twice, and then her letters ceased.

Some time later, I was staying with some friends at their pretty villa in a seaside town in the South of England. We had been having tea on the lawn, and my friends' two children had been amusing themselves by playing ball against the walls. Suddenly a shout of dismay from one of them told us that the ball had been hit over the high wall into the neighbouring garden. Obviously annoyed, my friend told the children, who clamoured for her to go and ask for it, that she would neither go nor send to that house for it, and as I looked surprised, she explained.

"A horrible clergyman lives there," she said, "with some miserable half-starved boys. It is supposed to be a school, but there is a mystery about the place, and everyone around is talking about it." The boys look cowed and illtreated, and several people say they will go to the S.P.C.C. to make inquiries." She shook her head at one of the children, who seemed on the verge of tears. "I have told you before, I will never send to that house again for your ball. When I did so last time, the clergyman was abominably rude to me."

I met the children's appealing eyes, and rose to my feet. "Let me go," I said. "I would like to see this terrible cleric."

My friend shrugged her shoulders. "The sight of the place will make you miserable," she exclaimed. "If the poor parents realized how the children were being treated, they would lose their reason, I believe." She added, "He gets the boys simply through advertisement."

I crossed the garden and walked up the road to the neighbouring gate. As I lifted the latch, I noticed that the paint had long ago peeled from it, and the handle could not have been polished for months. The

path was overgrown with weeds, and the garden wore an air of neglect and desolation that was amazing in such a locality. But it was when I entered the porch that I really felt the force of a horrible sensation of foreboding and depression. The bell was broken, and when I knocked, the sound seemed to echo and re-echo through an empty house. Again I knocked, but there came no reply. As I looked up at the windows with their dirty, I might truly say, filthy curtains, I saw a small pinched face peer out. For a moment I met the gaze of a pair of dark haunted eyes. Then, with a start, the boy disappeared. The sight filled me with a sick sort of fear. What was this house, I asked myself, with its atmosphere of gloom and decay and fear? I knocked again, loudly. Once more the sound echoed and re-echoed through the rooms. Presently I heard the opening of a door and the creaking of footsteps. A moment later the front door opened about an inch, and a gruff voice asked me what I wanted. Although I peered forward, I could see nothing except a pair of sullen glittering eyes. I explained my errand, and the speaker uttered a furious exclamation.

"Certainly you can't go into my garden," he said. "You should make your children more careful. My boys never fling their balls into other people's gardens."

I hesitated, wondering how I could induce the man to let me in. The next instant, in his indignation, he opened the door a little more, and I was startled by the sight of the thin unshaven face of the man, who, in his dirty black clothes and crumpled high collar, glared at me. Where had I seen that face before? Why was it so amazingly familiar?

In a flash came the remembrance of a neatly written letter, wrapped round my crystal—a letter which told an anxious mother of the writer's happiness and good health. As I stepped forward, the man shut the door in my face. I hesitated, standing on the steps, astounded by the knowledge which had dawned on me. An overwhelming pity for the unhappy inhabitants of that squalid-looking house swept over me, and I knocked again upon the door.

For a long time there came no answer. Then once again the door opened an inch, and the man's voice, shaking with passion, told me to leave his premises.

Raising my voice, I informed the speaker that I had not only come for a lost ball, but had also been sent by the parents of a scholar, Billy M——, to see him on their behalf. I heard the man gasp. Then there was silence. The next moment, cautiously, unwillingly, the door was opened a little more, and I stepped into the porch and faced the man.

He was evidently about forty-five, tall, though he held himself with a stoop. His face was exactly as I had seen it in the crystal, only, if possible, his eyes were even more evil-looking.

"You say you know my dear little Billy," he said, and the fury in his voice was replaced with an almost servile docility. "Then I must apologize for my seeming rudeness, but I assure you I have to be churlish over the matter of lost balls, as children I know nothing about keep coming to claim them, and I have to guard against the danger of them bringing to my dear boys the infection of some disease. You see," his lips parted into a smile, that made me shiver, "my wife and I have to be doubly careful, as the dear lads are

orphans for the time, their parents being in India or elsewhere abroad."

I nodded. By this time I was determined to see the boy. I realized, however, that my only chance of so doing depended on not letting the creature before me imagine I suspected anything.

"This house," I remarked, "does not look like a school."

He glanced at me sharply. "No, no," he said, "my wife and I endeavour to make it appear as simple and homelike as possible."

He followed the direction of my eyes and shrugged his shoulders with an expressive gesture, at the obvious decay and lack of paint on the door.

"I know they make the place rather in a mess, but, dear little souls, I only want them to be happy and *at home*, so that must be my apology for the untidiness of the place."

I tried to smile, and then asked if I might see Billy M——. In spite of himself, the man in his greasy, patched clergyman's clothes started violently, and I noticed the nervous twitching of his fingers.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed, and added quickly, "I am afraid dear Billy is ill. You cannot see him; he has a high temperature."

I expressed my concern, and asked who was his doctor.

Then he spoke with forced carelessness. "I am," he answered. "I have passed all my medical exams, and my wife was a hospital nurse before our marriage, and so, except in cases of severe illness, we look after the dear little chaps ourselves."

I stood my ground.

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I stood my ground.

"Then, surely," I objected, "he cannot be too ill to see me, as I have to give him a message from his mother?"

"If he is," I added, "I must cable to her."

The man's long fingers clenched, and he reminded me of some savage rat caught in a trap.

"If you will come to-morrow," he said, sullenly, "you shall see Billy. I will prepare him to have a visitor."

I hesitated, staring past him into the dirty hall with its torn linoleum. As I did so, a door opened, and the white, pinched face I had seen at the window peered out. The next moment, there came the echo of a woman's shrill voice, threatening someone called "Billy" for daring to leave his room without permission.

I saw the man's face grow pale as he heard it, and he almost pushed me from the porch, muttering that another boy called Billy would make the sick boy ill if he made any noise. I found myself outside, practically ejected by force.

That there was foul play going on in the gloomy, deserted-looking house I was convinced. And if I had to appeal to the police, I was determined to see for myself the fate of the child whose letter had come to me across thousands of miles.

On the following day, when I again walked up that weed-covered path, I noticed that some hasty attempt at tidying had taken place since the day before; and when I stretched out my hand to ring, I found that the broken bell had been repaired.

In answer to its cracked tinkle, the door was opened by a tall red-haired woman in a faded cotton gown, and a none too clean nurse's cap and apron.

"My husband expects you," she said, acidly. "He is with little Billy, who is better to-day."

She motioned to me to step in, and closed the door behind me.

As she led me up the carpetless stairs, I was struck by the ever-increasing suggestion of misery and mysterious dread

This was a supposed school for normal healthy boys. Yet not a sound was heard of noisy feet, or whistling, or cheery voices. The place seemed like some haunt of death, and I experienced the same deadly chill as I was to feel, years afterwards, when I first entered the crime-shadowed, blood-stained bungalow on the "Crumbles"

The woman, whom I instinctively disliked and suspected even more than her husband, opened a door with an exaggerated show of quiet caution, and moved in.

"The lady has come to see Billy." As she spoke, she crossed to the stretcher bed, beside which the man I had seen on the previous day sat, and bending, kissed the white-faced boy lying amongst the pillows.

I saw the flash of terror in the child's dark eyes, and the tremulous quivering of his lips as the woman touched him. "Now, Billy dear, be a good boy, and thank the lady for bringing news from your dear mother"

With punctilious gravity, the man waved me to his chair, and I sat down, looking keenly into the little pinched face of the boy who lay there, his dark eyes seeking mine as if in mute appeal. That he had been in bed ill the day before, I knew was a lie. His was the face I had seen at the window, and beside the door.

He hardly answered me when I spoke, and when he

did so, his terrified eyes would first seek those of the man standing like a sinister guard beside him.

"I am coming to take you for a motor drive soon," I said. And as the man in the clerical clothes started, I met his lowering eyes.

"You won't refuse your permission, will you?" I asked.

He bowed. "I shall be delighted," he answered, "if Billy would like to go. Only," he shrugged his shoulders—"our dear boys never seem to like to be away from my wife and me, even for a day."

I did not listen, I was struggling to keep back the tears from my eyes, as I noticed the traces of suffering on the little face, and saw the pitiful trembling of his lips. In spite of the clergyman's frown, I put my arm round the boy, and told him he would see his mother again.

As soon as I had left, I cabled the truth to India, and I called to see the S.P.C.C. Soon afterwards the "Ideal" home for children whose parents were in India was empty.

Where the cleric and his red-haired wife, who, rumour declared, was not his legal wife, disappeared, no one knew. Only a few half-starved ill-treated boys were found, and eventually restored to their parents who had paid large fees in the belief that their children were safe and happy in the home life given them by the clergyman and his wife.

Kept like prisoners, the boys had scarcely ever left the house and small garden. Their letters, written under supervision, were posted by the brute who starved them in the knowledge that, friendless and powerless, they were at his mercy. How he had continued so

long without being found out was difficult to understand. But those who had suspected that something was wrong were unwilling to interfere. The man was so cunning that no appeal from the boys had ever made its way out from that squalid-looking house, where, as a result of careful advertisement and much-faked recommendations, the advertiser had managed to induce parents in far-off lands to confide to him their children.

I think I have never seen two more evil faces than those of that so-called cleric and his so-called wife.

CHAPTER XXI

BY PARCELS POST

I OFTEN wonder what the postal authorities must think of the varied and often strange parcels that come to me from all parts of the world. Sometimes these parcels are so insecurely wrapped that the contents bulge out for public inspection. Sometimes they are souvenirs, but generally they contain objects sent by their owners to be placed on my crystal.

By the way, I often marvel at the astonishing promptitude of the post office officials in bringing me, without any delay, letters and parcels that have been most inadequately addressed.

"The Society Clarevoyante, London," "Miss Montague, London," "The Society Clarevoyante, West End, England," such are a few specimens of the addresses on letters I have received with as much promptness as if they had borne my full name and address.

I think the most pathetic and touching of all objects sent to me from a distance to place upon the crystal was a little child's worn, faded coat. It had been carefully patched here and there, and had a button missing as though tiny fingers had fidgeted it off. Mourning relations had sent it in the hope that I could tell them what had been the fate of the little wearer, a little boy of three, who had last been seen alive near his own home three years before.

Since then, as if the earth had swallowed him up, there had been no trace of him, no sign. He had disappeared completely, and despite frantic searching by all the neighbourhood, the pitiful mystery had never been solved. What had been his fate?

If only those who had lost him could ascertain, they would at least have the consolation of suspense ended. But when I looked in the crystal after having enveloped it in the tiny coat, I could see nothing but water, ever-rising water. Had the little boy's toddling feet taken him to the treacherous river, to be swept out to the distant sea? Night after night for a week I looked, but always saw the same dark, rushing water.

When I told those who had appealed to me, they said it only strengthened the fear which was almost a certainty in their own minds that he had fallen into the distant river, to be carried far from the peaceful hamlet of his home, out to sea.

Wedding rings are often sent to me, by rich and poor alike, to place upon the ball. One woman wrote pleading that I would try to procure a vision telling her the whereabouts of her husband. He had deserted her and her children seven years previously, and she could obtain no news as to whether he lived or was dead. Another wrote to find out if there was any hope of work for her husband, a gallant V C, while yet another was eager to ascertain the earliest date possible at which she might look forward to the felicity of wearing widow's weeds for a man who she wrote 'resembles in character a hooded snake, and in person an ourang-outang!'

Objects of underwear reach me in shoals, and pieces of jewellery are dispatched with amazing confidence from married and unmarried women alike. One girl

actually forwarded me her engagement ring, a half-hoop of diamonds, as she lived on the Continent and was eager to know if she might expect the old fairy story ending "they lived happy ever after" to her approaching marriage.

Spoons and forks have sometimes been chosen as the means of obtaining visions, and in some instances the senders have forwarded them unwashed, to make certain that their individual influence might not be obliterated by clean water !

Handkerchiefs come by the dozen, and I have acquired enough locks of hair, even in these "shingled days," to enable me to set up quite an extensive "pin curl" establishment ! Men who write for visions from a distance often send watches, tobacco pouches, and socks. From India one morning I got a pair of motor-goggles from an Englishman, and from a native lawyer yards and yards of a muslin turban.

By registered post one morning arrived a common soup plate liberally smeared with gravy. It was from a distressed owner who had lost his dearly-loved dog, and the plate, he said, was exactly as the animal had left it. So he forwarded it, to be put on my crystal.

"I want to send you something which has been in close contact with me for a long time," one lady wrote, "so I am forwarding my teeth. As I have no other plate, and cannot eat without them, return at once." Equally startling and unexpected was a registered parcel containing a glass eye which the owner had taken out in order to make certain of obtaining a clear crystal vision !

An empty medicine bottle, a piece of home-made

currant cake, a human caul, and a playing card fingered by the murderer Ronald True, are typical articles sent to me at different times to lay upon my crystal

A whole baby outfit, stained with ironmould, came from one poor soul, who, after sixty years of life, still hankered to unravel the mystery of her parentage. The garments sent, she explained, had clothed her more than half a century ago, when she was found on a doorstep. These clothes, unmarked, were all that could help her to ascertain her identity. Strange visions flashed on the glass with bewildering rapidity when I placed the baby garments round it, and after I had described them to the sender, she wrote to say they had helped her to establish a clue.

I have found that clairvoyance, like charity, is expected by many to cover a multitude of attributes and people in consequence come to enlist my help on most extraordinary occasions.

Thus Commander Kenworthy, in his naval days, once begged me to pen a proposal of marriage for him, in French, to a lady who spoke little English, and, after a series of motor accidents, a distinguished Lady of Grace of St John of Jerusalem requested me to sit alone in her garage in the luxurious car which had come to grief, and to ascertain by my crystal if any evil influence pervaded it.

I have often been asked to "lay" ghosts in haunted houses, the owners being seemingly convinced that the possession of second sight necessarily enables one to spirit away spirits!

An optimistic builder once enlisted my sympathy, and asked me to *will* that houses built by his rival would not sell.

"If you wish very hard," a girl once said to me, "I know my coming baby will be a boy. If it is a girl, my 'in-laws' will be furious, so I leave it to you to work the miracle!"

Often when I read the crystal in a person's own house I am struck by the effect which the surroundings have on the ball.

When I read it for Maud Allan in her own quaint house in Regent's Park, the annexe to a monastery, I was impressed by the intriguing influence of other days quite out of harmony with the dancer herself.

In the grounds of Buckingham Palace, one day, I sensed this influence of surroundings, as for a moment I looked into the slab of crystal I always wear, and saw the shadows and forms of people of a long-dead time. I was standing on the great lawn beside a blind soldier, "You must see wonderful things in your crystal here," he said, and before I could answer he went on, "I love being at the Palace, it is just lovely to see it in this sunshine."

I glanced at his poor sightless eyes, wondering at the fact that nearly always the blind wish to make us feel that they *see*.

A strange example of this struck me years ago, when the late Lord Midleton first came to call on me in Ireland. Before the house were two lakes, and, a sluice needing repairs, the water had been let out, leaving little but a nasty wet slob of mud.

When I came into the drawing-room, Lord Midleton, whom I had not seen before, and who I had no idea was blind, held out his hand, remarking genially, "How beautiful the lakes look to-day, with the sun upon the water!"

'I stared at him, and then, imagining he was trying to pull my leg, laughed as I answered, "The mud is absolutely horrible, but the men are to finish repairing the sluices to-day."

He did not appear to notice, and went on again to remark upon the charm of the water with the boat upon it. This second observation reduced me to stupefied silence. At this point however, my visitor's son made an expressive gesture, and pointed to his father's eyes. But for this enlightenment I should never have suspected the affliction for Lord Middleton moved and walked like a man with the full use of his sight. And he liked to convey that impression.

Before his blindness he had seen the lakes full of water. He had never imagined them mud slob.

A funny incident of a strange mistake, made by a person who had eyes but did not see, happened at my house in South Kensington when some friends who had come from the country called to ask me to read the crystal for them, and stayed to tea. In the middle of tea, the page boy announced the well-known policewoman, Commandant Allen.

Very smart in her blue uniform and high boots, she came in, and I introduced her to my other friends, who had never seen her, and, being from the country, had never heard her name.

Smirking a little, the eldest present, an elderly spinster, looked admiringly at the Commandant.

"I always say," she exclaimed, quite coquettishly, "that there is a breezy atmosphere about a naval officer which quite cheers everyone."

"The Commandant is not a naval officer," I hastily

explained, when the lady shook her finger playfully at her.

"Well then, a middy, if you like, or, as my brother, a naval doctor, slangily calls them—a snotty!"

While the Commandant was endeavouring not to choke over her tea, which she had gulped the wrong way, I informed my visitor that the "breezy officer," *alias* the "snotty," was of the feminine gender.

Except on the occasion when I saw Frenchmen fighting to escape from a Parisian theatre on a cry of "Fire," I have never seen anyone make such a hasty exit as did that sister of the naval doctor, while close upon her heels followed her obviously confused and perturbed companions!

I took a hand in a rather amusing game of cross-purposes not long ago. A woman who had answered my advertisement for a housekeeper for my seaside cottage was ushered by mistake into the drawing-room, instead of into the kitchen to be interviewed by my housekeeper. For when the page boy asked if she had an appointment, she had testily told him that she had been told to call and see me.

At the moment I had mislaid my appointment list, and when I saw the exceedingly rotund lady with the florid face and small rose-bedecked bonnet perched on the top of her grey-haired, bullet-shaped head, I concluded she was someone who had called to ask for my advice. Shaking her warmly by the hand, I invited her to take a seat in my best chair, and not waiting for her to speak, picked up my crystal.

"I read your advertisement asking me to call," she began, a little flustered.

I shook my head. "I never advertise," I answered.

Then, pushing the crystal into her perspiring left hand, "Hold this," I went on, "and put your other hand over it"

"I don't understand," she expostulated "Why are you making me do this?"

"I can't see a thing if you don't," I answered, rather sharply. People who come to ask the help of my clairvoyance and then grumble because they have to hold the crystal irritate me

Open-mouthed, my visitor peered at me "So you're blind then?" she exclaimed "Do you mean that you can't see anything without that ball?"

"No," I answered, still more shortly, "I can't see anything at all"

"But why must *I* hold it? Why don't you hold it yourself?"

"Because I can only see if *you* hold it!"

"Mercy!" Her fat, podgy fingers convulsively grasped the crystal "Aren't you afraid of walking into the sea down there?"

I started Was she some escaped lunatic?

"I've never lived with blind people," my visitor announced in an injured voice "Of course, if I suit you, I would do all I could, but I wouldn't undertake to lead you I was never good at hospital work"

Thoroughly convinced by now that I was in the presence of a madwoman, I kept silence

"Ow long must I hold this?" my visitor asked

"You can put it on the cushion, now," I answered. She gasped noisily

"Why must I put it on the cushion?" she asked

"Do you want me to read for you or not?" I asked sternly

"Read for me?" she echoed. "It's very kind of you, madam, but I haven't the time to spare to listen to you."

Thoroughly exasperated, I banged down the ball. "Then," I demanded, "if you haven't the time to listen why on earth are you here?"

She shook her head with an injured air. "Naturally I wanted to see you. I don't be going to places from advertisements only."

"I repeat, I do not advertise. I have never advertised. I shall never advertise."

She pursed her lips, and raised her eyebrows. "I suppose you *are* Miss Montague?" she asked.

"Yes," I told her, "I am Miss Montague."

"Then perhaps seeing's believin', when I show you your own advertisement."

As she spoke, she opened an exceedingly portly bag, and took out an old-fashioned purse, ornamented with brass studs.

"Now," she exclaimed triumphantly, "what do you say to *that*?"

Into my hands she thrust a greasy piece of newspaper. Against one small paragraph was a mark in blue ink. "Wanted immediately, for seaside cottage, a respectable cook-housekeeper. Apply Miss Montague, 24a Harrington Rd., S.W."

"Now," exclaimed the lady, her ample bosom heaving with wheezy emotion, "do you advertise, or not?"

CHAPTER XXII

HER FATEFUL LETTER

I WAS recently amused to see myself described in a newspaper as "The Well-Known Spookist" although in reality my own knowledge of Spiritualism has been limited entirely to the few occasions when I have actually seen ghosts.

Once when I was staying in County Limerick with relations of the late General Sir William Butler, I was being driven home with three other guests from a dance in the neighbourhood. Our vehicle was a jaunting car, and our driver our host's son, Jim Barry, an old friend of my own. Suddenly, as we went at a brisk trot along the country road that lay before us clear as daylight in the full moon, the horse stopped dead, snorting with terror. Right in front of us, in the very middle of the road a black horse stood, motionless, a bareheaded man in a strange old-time costume on his back. There seemed nothing extraordinary about either the horse or man, except the latter's clothes, which dated back to more than a century ago.

The chestnut reared, and, in spite of Jim Barry's efforts, swung violently round, nearly upsetting the car, and bolted. Clinging for dear life to the swaying car, I threw one backward glance over my shoulder. There in the middle of the moonlit road, I saw the man and the horse. Motionless they stood, with the

moonbeams glinting on the old-fashioned stirrups, and on the buttons of the rider's coat. At last, a mile farther on, Jim Barry managed to pull up the terrified chestnut.

"You all saw him?" he asked, eagerly. As the others answered in the affirmative, I nodded my head miserably, quite unable to speak. To drive in a jaunting car under normal conditions was always a vexation of the spirit, for I had never grown acclimatized to that particular form of transport. But to be obliged to hang on for dear life while being bumped by a runaway horse over a typically rough Irish road, after midnight, was beyond a joke. I was not afraid of the mounted ghost. I was very much afraid of the snorting chestnut! But Jim Barry was too engrossed in what we all had seen to notice my perturbation.

"That's the ghost of a man who was murdered a hundred years ago, as he rode past his avenue gates," he said. "Ever since then, people have seen him mounting guard near the place of his murder."

He paused, and then held up his hand.

"Listen!"

Far in the distance, echoing over the hills in that desolate spot, came a faint sound as of a horse pawing the ground. It was an eerie moment. . . . The chestnut, pricking his ears once more, plunged uneasily, and Jim Barry drove on. There could be no question of imagination or fancy. There were five of us on that jaunting car, and each of us had seen—as clearly as we saw each other—a strangely bridled horse, and a bareheaded man leaning forward over his neck. Why does he haunt that desolate spot? To strike terror into the souls of the descendants of his murderers? *Quién sabe?*

That was one of the few occasions on which I have seen an apparition in no way connected with myself. Another instance occurred the other day. Inexplicable things—widely described by the Press—had been happening in a Berkshire cottage. For fifteen years the present inmates had lived in their home, in peace. Then suddenly, to their terror, the furniture began to move about as if lifted by unseen hands. Pictures slid mysteriously from the walls. Objects placed in one position would be moved to another. For some weeks the inhabitants of the cottage kept the secret of the disquieting happenings to themselves. At last, however, in sheer desperation, they called in the police officer. He came, investigated, and confessed himself baffled.

Then I was begged to go down. Although I did not expect to be of any help, I consented willingly, for the case interested me immensely. Lady Carisbrooke, also keenly interested, motored over with me one afternoon, and in the village we met two other friends. When we arrived at the pretty thatched cottage, a small crowd was gathered in the roadway, staring curiously at the gate, on which was nailed a board with the notice "No Admittance." From a window I caught sight of pale strained faces peering anxiously out. A few moments later, I walked up the tiny garden path with Lady Carisbrooke and my other companions, and entered the cottage.

After a warm welcome from the man and his wife, I found myself in the small cosy sitting-room, where, it was alleged, the furniture moved so mysteriously. My friends had been bidden to wait upstairs until I called them.

As I sat down on a brightly-hued chintz chair, I thought I had never in my life seen anything less spook-like. A fire of logs crackled cheerfully on the hearth, while the afternoon sunshine filtered into the room slanting on two Pierrot dolls, which, I had been told, were the mascots of the two daughters of the house. Taking my crystal, I stared into it . . . and then even as it seemed to fade into a blurred black mist, I started, thinking someone, unnoticed, had entered the room. From the door came slow shuffling footsteps. . . . Distinctly I felt something touch my arm. . . . Then I heard again the footsteps . . . moving away.

A big vase toppled over suddenly as if pushed . . . a photograph fell off a table on to the floor. Next, the sofa at the far end of the room moved as if pushed, and I distinctly heard the laboured breathing of its unseen propeller. Then I started violently. A big arm-chair shot suddenly into a position right before the fire, and even as I stared at it, tipped slowly backwards.

My first inclination was to fly. I managed, however, to keep my head, and, determined to see what caused the chair to balance backwards. I suddenly caught one of the arms to pull it to me. To my great amazement I could not move it. It was as if some heavy body was resting in it !

This was too much for my nerves, and rushing from the room, I called my companions. A few minutes later as we sat talking, I suddenly pointed. A picture on the wall jerked violently backwards and forwards, and then slowly, slowly, seemed to *creep* down the wall, and lay noiselessly on the floor !

We all saw it.

The big nail from which it had hung was firm as a rock. The thick cord suspending it was intact. Face downwards the picture lay, as if laid down by some unseen hand.

Breathlessly we looked at each other. Then my companions told me how in the bedroom above, another picture—a much larger one—had slid down in exactly the same way. They had all watched its eerie descent. At their suggestion, I now went up with my crystal, into this bedroom. Closing the door, I looked round. It was a good-sized, light, airy room with very little furniture. I sat down near the window and took up my crystal. Speedily I saw in it an old wrinkled face, and watched the moving of a bent old woman leaning on a stick. Almost immediately, I was startled by the echo of slow, shuffling feet. Then, a cold sweat breaking out on my brow, I saw the old woman. Close beside me she moved, small and crooked, with a worn, wrinkled face. I called out, hardly knowing what I was saying:

“Why have you come?”

“I cannot rest.” The voice was clear and decided. Lower and less firmly, came the added word: “Warning.”

I don't know how I got out of the room. Down the narrow stairs I rushed to tell my friends, and a few minutes later I sent for the owner of the house and told him what I had seen.

As I described the old bent figure, he started. “She is my mother,” he exclaimed. “You have described her as if you had known her all your life. She died in the bedroom where you were sitting, two years ago.”

More than that he would not say, although I felt sure he could have thrown further light on the matter.

A week later, I was begged once more to go to the haunted cottage. This time I went straight to the bedroom, and closing the door, sat on a bed-chair peering into my crystal. Suddenly I nearly dropped the ball, as a rush-bottomed arm-chair jerked towards me, and there, sitting in it with folded hands, was the old woman !

In a flash I seemed to take in every detail of her furrowed face, her folded hands. Hardly knowing what I said, I asked her to go away, and leave the house in peace. When I had finished speaking, I sat, rooted to the spot, listening. Then, clearly, quite clearly, the old woman answered. A letter of hers had been destroyed, she said—a letter containing a solemn secret.

I remember hearing my own voice again, imploring her to go away, as she was causing so much terror to her relatives. I remember seeing her rise, a wizened, bent old woman with earnest, eager eyes. She stretched out her arms, and her voice rapped out :

“ I am going away . . . I am going . . . now.”

Then came a blank. . . .

An hour and a half later, the friends who had motored down with me came in to find me lying in a dead faint. I must have lain there, they said, for over an hour. Why I fainted I do not know. I wasn't afraid of the old woman, although I had expected to be. Later, I faced the owner of the house.

“ Surely you must know something,” I said, “ of a destroyed letter belonging to your mother ? ”

For a moment he stared in horrified amazement. Then his wife burst out crying. “ Tell her the truth,” she sobbed, “ tell her the truth.”

So at last the man told me that after his mother's death, he had, all unwittingly, burned, unopened, a letter she had left, dealing with a tragic secret concerning someone in her life. This secret only she herself could reveal, and she had given her promise to disclose it by word of mouth, or in writing, *before her death*. She had not forgotten her promise. She had revealed it in a letter to be opened after her death, in common justice to another.

That justice could never be done now. . . . The letter had been destroyed, *unopened*. The secret of her life is buried with her. The wrong she wished righted can never be righted now. I cannot divulge its nature, but it must affect till death another's life and honour. But I made the son of the old woman promise to tell that other that she had kept her word. *She had written* before her death. So this other learned that she had not failed him after all. Perhaps this satisfied the old woman, for after my last visit, she kept her promise to me that she would go away. The cottage was once more restored to calm. There came no more the echo of those shuffling feet. It is a strange fact that about the very time she was speaking to me, every clock in the cottage, though all were fully wound, suddenly stopped.

So it seemed that, all unconsciously, I had been instrumental in "laying a ghost."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MISSING PEARLS

ONE of the happiest sides of my clairvoyant gift has been the power to use it in the interest of different charities, and above all others, those in aid of the men wounded in the Great War.

The many fêtes and bazaars that I have attended have also helped me greatly by affording me opportunities of studying, in rapid succession, the most diverse types of humanity.

Sometimes invalids have asked me, when unable to come to my house, to go to them instead, and on one or two such occasions I have met with strange experiences.

One day I received a letter from a lady, saying that she was ill, and that as she was very anxious to consult me, she would be exceedingly grateful if I would go to her. The matter on which she wanted to consult me, she said, was to her, "one of life or death."

Accordingly, I drove on a fixed afternoon to the address she had given me. I found it was a flat in St. John's Wood, and on ringing the bell was shown, by a maid dressed in an amazing costume of yellow silk into what was obviously the dining-room of the flat. The room was separated from the adjoining one by a gilded partition elaborately painted with water-nymphs and fauns. Money "shrieked" from every object I beheld, from the new silver plate on the sideboard to

the wonderful golden plush hangings and upholstery of the oak furniture.

Presently the maid re-entered, to inform me confidentially that the daughter of the house would come to me as soon as she could leave a lot of company in the drawing-room. Madame herself, she added, was expecting to see me after her tea. Before I could speak, the door was flung noisily open, and a young woman dashed in whistling "Tea for Two." I contemplated her in some surprise. She was obviously a Jewess. Her raven black hair was brushed straight back from her rouge-tinted, carmine-lipped face, the most pronounced feature of which was her high-bridged nose.

She wore pyjamas, and they were the most amazing pyjamas I have ever seen. Of brilliant yellow satin ornamented with hand-painted cornflowers, they were apparently tied together with violet ribbon. Her carmine-tipped fingers were loaded with rings which might have done credit to a ruling eastern potentate, and her long diamond ear-rings nearly touched her shoulders.

"I am Meydame's (so she pronounced it) daughter," she announced haughtily, in a shrill nasal voice. "Sit down, and I'll send you some tea." She addressed me, I noticed, as if I had been a maid coming for a situation, and made no attempt to shake hands. "I will send for you when my mother is ready."

I was too taken aback to speak. My coming there had been, simply and solely a concession to the earnest appeal of a sick woman. The pyjama'd lady seemed to think that the concession had consisted in allowing me to come ! For a few minutes after she had left the room, I contemplated an indignant departure ; but

finally the thought of the sick "Meydame" restrained me. As I sat inwardly fuming, I heard through the thin partition the sound of the high nasal voice. "Oh! yes, mind you, she seems quite a lidy—she really isn't so common after all."

Here a clamour of voices rose in different keys, apparently making some request, only to be silenced by the shrill organ of the pyjama owner. "Ask her in here? Oh, my dear, I couldn't! What would Ma say? I couldn't have a person of that class in with us in our drawing-room."

My irritation at my reception evaporated. My visit promised some amusing possibilities of real entertainment.

One or two people made objections to the daughter's refusal, and I heard a woman remark, "It's no use being so particular, my dear. Why, I often have my dressmaker in the drawing-room, when nobody's there." "Yes, you're right," the nasal organ trumpeted forth, "*when nobody's there*," but Mrs Haynes is coming, the one whose sister married into a baronet's family." "Oh! do bring her in and let's have a look at her. From her pictures she seems all right."

"All right," conceded the lady in the pyjamas. "When we have done tea, I'll bring her in." She giggled noisily. "But I can't possibly ask her till then she might expect to have tea with us!" Her merriment was apparently not shared by her guests, and again I heard objections and renewed entreaties for my admittance.

A moment later the door flew open, and once more the raven-headed person pattered in with her mule-clad feet into the room.

"Come in, Miss Montague," she exclaimed with the air of bestowing a favour on a supplicating mendicant. "I am going to take you into the drawing-room."

I hesitated. "Is your mother there?"

"No, oh! no," she giggled, "but my friends just want to see what you're like!"

It was on the tip of my tongue to tell her to order a taxi, but my curiosity to see if her friends were all likewise clad in *matinée* pyjamas triumphed over my injured dignity. I rose and followed her meekly to the drawing-room.

"This is Miss Montague," my companion said, as she ushered me in, and I found myself the target of at least twenty pairs of curious eyes. Well-dressed women, some in furs, others in frocks of a shortness suited to the legs of a child of five, stared open-mouthed. No one offered to speak to me except one woman a little less showily dressed than the rest, who extended her hand and then withdrew it quickly, in obedience to a sign from her neighbour.

"So you're the famous *clairevoyantée*," one ample-bosomed lady with a hooked nose and priceless sables remarked as she eyed me through her diamond-mounted lorgnette. "I always thought *Clairevoyantées* were black!"

"Not always," I answered, still standing in the middle of the room, as apparently there was no vacant chair, while the lady in the pyjamas whirled herself with nonchalant indifference on the musical stool.

"But you *were* born in India," another lady remarked, admiring the top of her high-legged green boots, which matched her ermine-trimmed costume.

"Yes," I answered, "I was born in India, but that does not make me black."

A loud titter of amusement greeted this remark.

"It's nice for you bein' *clarevoyantée*," the plump lady remarked. "It must give you the chance to meet nice people and see nice houses."

"It does—sometimes," I answered.

Then, tired of standing, tired of being the centre of twenty pairs of eyes belonging to daughters of Israel, I turned to the lady on the music stool. "Will you kindly tell your mother I can't wait to see her any longer?"

If a bomb had dropped in that room, it would not have caused more consternation.

Frigidly the lady I had addressed rose, and touching the bell, addressed the silk-clad maid. "Ask *Meydame*," she said, with amusing *hauteur*, "if it is convenient for her to see the *clairvoyantong* now."

Rather constrainedly the other occupants of the room talked on, utterly ignoring me, out of respect for the lady in pyjamas, who had, not unseen by me, made a gesture of outraged annoyance in my direction.

"Please, Miss"—the maid rustled into our midst—"Madame says she will send for the lady when she has finished gargling."

The daughter nodded. "Take Miss Montague to wait in the dining-room," she said.

Past the maid I stalked into the hall. "Please call me a taxi," I said. Then, as she gasped, I moved to the front door. As I did so, a yellow-clad figure in pyjamas rushed out, her arms outstretched.

"Miss Montague, do come back," she cried. "Mrs Haynes has just told us you are a relation of

Lady Euan-Smith. I had no idea of that! My mother has a great admiration for her! It was so stupid of Mrs Haynes not to have told us before that you were not a common *clairvoyantong*!"

I paused, my hand on the door. "If you had known," I said sweetly, "I might have been permitted to sit." Then, laughing at her horrified face, I turned and left. What happened I never heard, or what the lady said when she had finished gargling and found the "*clairvoyantée*" *alias* "*clairvoyantong*" had had the effrontery to depart.

I had not, however, seen the last of the lady in pyjamas. Shortly afterwards I was helping my cousin to choose a fur coat, and she took me to some furriers in the city. "The old man is a Jew, as rich as Cræsus," she explained. "His daughter, covered with diamonds generally, helps in the shop; but he has good furs."

A few moments later, in obedience to the call of a small ferret-eyed old man who promised to supply my cousin with flawless pelts, a raven-haired lady came forward, attired, not in yellow pyjamas, but in a tightly-fitting velvet dress much ornamented with diamond chains.

"Rebecca," the old man said sharply, "bring those ermine sets we got in yesterday"—He stopped short and peered over his glasses at his daughter, who had suddenly turned crimson as her own carmine lips, and was staring, openmouthed and horrified, at me—"What's the matter, Rebecca?" asked the old man. But Rebecca turned and hurried away as if to find the skins. She did not return. To the old furrier's obvious annoyance, a white-coated assistant appeared with an armful of ermine wraps, but the lady of the yellow pyjamas was nowhere to be seen!

Often the crystal reflects warnings connected with money and business transactions, warnings which, if followed, will save the person warned from disaster. An unfortunate case of a neglected warning was that of *Señorita Odelia de Ortuzar*, the handsome and talented sister of the *Princess de Villa Franca*, who came one day full of optimism, and asked me to look in the crystal for her. When I did so, I told her that the ball was clouded with the shadow of probable impending financial disaster. I warned her that if she invested any money in the manner she was contemplating, she would suffer a great loss. I described to her two figures which appeared in the crystal, those of a man and a woman, whom she at once recognized. They would be, I said, the means of her ruin. She seemed vexed and indignant, and was certainly quite incredulous. The man and woman described were, she declared, a Russian prince and princess and her friends, who were going to be her partners in a financial venture. She assured me that the warning was quite wrong. I looked again for her, and repeated that she would be ruined unless she withdrew at once from her intended undertaking. Thereupon, she left me in annoyance, and I did not hear from her for a long time. Then one day I received an urgent message. It was from the *Señorita*. She wanted me to go to her, if possible, at once. She was in great trouble.

The memory of my warning of many months previously flashed into my mind, and the moment I saw the *Señorita* I realized that some great trouble had overtaken her. I was horrified at her wan pallor, and the strained look in her eyes.

“ Oh ! ” she exclaimed bitterly, “ why didn’t I listen

to you? Why didn't I believe your warning?" Her face grew still paler. "My dear," she cried, "you were right, perfectly right, in all you said." She paused and her lips trembled. "I have lost every penny of the money I invested through those people. I am ruined, utterly ruined!"

Before the Simla Bank smash, a gentleman came to consult me, and I saw for him an impending financial crash. I told him that unless he at once made other arrangements for the safety of his money, he would lose a great deal of it in the East. He had been in the Army, had been High Sheriff for his county and was well known alike as a sportsman and a keen business man. He rather laughed at my warning, and said he thought the vision was pessimistic, as his money was quite secure.

Some time later, I received a letter from him.

"I curse myself for a fool," he wrote. "It would have been so easy to act on your warning. I ignored it, and consequently since the smash of the Simla Bank, I am a poor man."

In striking contrast was an elderly gentleman who lived in South Africa, and who having written for an appointment, came to see me.

I soon discovered from the crystal that he was about to sink a great deal of capital in a concern, and that the step would bring him to beggary. It was a startlingly vivid picture, and I tried to impress its gravity on him.

He seemed rather sceptical, but admitted that he was on the point of making a large investment. This, indeed, had been the reason for his visit, as he hoped I would be able to see the ultimate success of the concern in which he was interested. It had, he believed, gigantic possibilities.

I assured him that it had no possibilities at all, except those of utter failure and ruin.

He was politely incredulous, and, when he left, thanked me for what I had said, but added that he was too convinced of the worth of the concern in question to abandon the project.

A year later he called again.

"I have to thank you," he said, "for having saved me through your crystal warning from being to-day a pauper. In spite of my efforts to convince myself that your warning was all nonsense, I could not shake it off. At length I felt so uneasy that I determined to draw back and lose the chance of making a million."

He held out a newspaper cutting.

"That will show you the smash of the company in which I was on the point of investing more than two-thirds of my capital when I came to you."

Some time ago, the owner of a large hotel asked me if I would read the crystal for him as he was anxious to know the truth about some business matters.

When I looked into the ball I saw the reflection of a young man whom I described and my visitor at once recognized.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "that is Prince O——. He has just taken a suite of rooms here. I have had them painted and redecorated. He will live here with his staff of servants."

As I continued to look into the ball there came, to my astonishment, the reflection of the interior of a cell in a French gaol.

I told my companion that he must be careful of his new visitor, hinting discreetly that if he trusted him he would regret it, and described the vision of the French prison cell.

The hotel proprietor was taken aback but incredulous.

"He is rich," he argued, "he would never let me down. That picture of prison must be for someone else."

When I assured him that it was nothing of the sort, that it only applied to the man reflected in the crystal, the man whose description he had at once recognized, he left me, convinced that what I had seen had been moonshine.

And in the days which followed, it appeared as if he had been right. With punctilious regularity, the private secretary to the Prince paid the bills.

But there came a day when the usual cheque was not forthcoming. Not liking to appear too pressing, the hotel owner and manager agreed to let it wait.

Another week, and another, went by, and His Highness seemed too occupied with important affairs to find time for the settlement of his account.

Then one evening, late, the Prince rushed in. He seemed angry with his secretary for not having cashed a cheque for him earlier in the day at the bank, as he wanted to cross to Paris for two days.

With magnificent nonchalance, he wrote out a large cheque made payable to the hotel manager for three hundred pounds to settle his bill, plus fifty pounds for his own travelling expenses until he reached Paris.

His easy frankness stilled any whisper of uneasiness in the manager's mind ; and, when he knew that the Prince was simply going away with an *attaché* case and leaving all his heavy luggage behind, he went to his till to cash the fifty pounds.

Two days later, I was struck by the worried expression on the manager's face.

"I do trust your crystal was wrong," he exclaimed

"but the Prince went off to Paris——" He stopped short.

"Without paying?" I queried.

"He gave me a cheque," he answered, "for the amount due plus fifty pounds which I cashed for him. . . . The cheques came back from the bank—R.D."

As I did not speak, he went on, as if trying to reassure himself.

"He has left his servants here so it must be all right. Besides, I have all his luggage."

Yes, he had all his luggage.

But when, weeks after, the same luggage was seized for non-payment, the news reached the luckless manager that His Highness was in prison in Paris, for playing much the same confidence trick. The heavy trunks and boxes were found to contain not priceless heirlooms saved from the Revolution, as he had declared, but rubbish which might have been collected from disused iron foundries and rag and bone shops! And even when the Prince was eventually liberated from the prison cell which had been so clearly reflected in the crystal, the manager never saw any of his three hundred and fifty pounds; while, as an addition of "insult to injury," he had to pay dustmen and rubbish removers to cart away the contents of the baggage which he had held as guarantee of payment!

An incident which will always be indelibly imprinted on my mind happened at a dinner-party in the private room of a hotel.

It was quite a brilliant affair and the tables were beautifully decorated, and all the guests appeared to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. Suddenly, without any

warning, the lights went out, and we were left in total darkness.

One of the servants groped to the door, and exclaiming that the wires had fused, went in search of candles.

The guests sat laughing, making the best of the situation until a moment later, as suddenly as it had faded, the light flooded the room, and a waiter explained that the fused wire had been instantly repaired. Just as he finished speaking, a woman sitting near me sprang up and screamed that her pearl necklace had disappeared. It had been round her neck before the light went out.

No one except one servant had left the room since the incident, and as the lady continued to shriek hysterically that the necklace must have been stolen, our hostess, white as her own lace gown, asked the servants to remain in the room, and told them to search the floor.

But there was no trace of the missing pearls.

By this time the woman was sobbing hysterically, and, quite beside herself, was making palpable insinuations against the honesty of the guests ; until, crimson with anger, one lady sprang to her feet.

" I, for one, must ask that we may be searched," she said to our hostess.

There was an uncomfortable pause, and beside me I heard a smothered exclamation—" My God ! "

Startled, I looked at my right-hand neighbour, an immaculately turned-out, good-looking man about thirty. His face was ghastly and there was no shadow of doubt as to his perturbation.

The awful thought flashed in my mind—could he have taken the missing necklace ?

My hostess looked at me across the table, then met the eyes of her excited guest.

"It seems too horrible," she stammered, "to expect you all to undergo such an indignity."

She hesitated. "Let us ask Miss Montague if she can tell us where the necklace is."

As the guests unanimously approved the speaker's proposal, I had no option but to agree, and a few minutes later, a little apart from the rest, I sat looking into the large slab of crystal I always wear.

For a long time I could see nothing at all. Then slowly a mist seemed to envelop the crystal, and I saw reflected in it the figure of a man, who stood with his face buried in his hands in an attitude of despair.

Presently he raised his face, and I recognized the young man who had been sitting on my right!

For a moment I was silent. What could I say? I dared not describe what I had seen. It would pin suspicion on the man who, of all at the table, had seemed distressed at the idea of being searched. I made the excuse that the crystal was too blurred to distinguish anything at all.

"Then," the owner of the lost necklace spoke shrilly, "I think Lady M—— is right, everyone should be searched. I distinctly felt my pearls pulled when the lights went out."

I shall never forget the unpleasant experience of that night with its dramatic finish, when, the last of all the guests, the young man whom I had seen reflected in the ball, stepped forward to be searched.

"It's no use," he exclaimed, hoarsely. "I may as well make a clean breast of it." As he spoke he plunged his hand into his tail coat pocket. "When the lights

went out I couldn't resist the temptation. I knew there was nothing to eat in my place, and I thought these would keep me till to-morrow night."

He paused, his face like chalk.

"I took my clothes out of pawn to come here to-night, just to be once more with the old lot—perhaps for the last time." His voice shook. "I've been out of a job for twelve months and I've come to this——"

As he spoke, he dragged out of his pocket two round objects. With a gesture of passionate hopelessness he flung down on the table two bread rolls.

The silent consternation was only broken when the owner of the necklace screamed again, waving the missing pearls above her head, like a being suddenly gone mad.

"They slipped down my bodice," she shrieked. "I only felt them just now."

But no one heeded her. All eyes were fixed upon the white-faced man, who defiantly faced his fellow guests.

Then our hostess broke the tension. Springing up, she laid her hand upon his arm, and the rest, following her lead, crowded sympathetically around him.

It was a painful scene. Its redeeming feature lay in the fact that it was instrumental in helping an almost desperate man to attain, at last, a good job.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SITE

ONCE when I was speaking at a meeting upon Psychic Phenomena, a lady stood up and asked me to explain and enumerate the different means of obtaining psychic vision, and she seemed extremely dubious when I answered that the question of means was a limitless one. Anything can serve as a channel for clairvoyant visions, although certain recognized objects, such as crystals, water and sand, are the most popular. As I have already stated, the object used is merely, in reality, an aid to concentration.

Once in Egypt I saw a strange demonstration of sand-divining by an old Arab, which had a dramatic sequel.

A friend of mine, a gunner, had heard of the fame of a certain seer, and made a journey across the desert to his tent. On learning the motive of his visit, the Arab took seven handfuls of sand, and placed them in an oven for exactly seven minutes. Then, while my friend waited, he spread the hot sand on his praying mat, and for the same time knelt upon the sand, without moving.

When he knew from his old-fashioned watch, one of his most treasured possessions, that the seven minutes were up, he rose, and told my friend to come near him and lay his right hand upon the sand on which he himself had knelt. Then he stood facing the sunset, and in a low sing-song voice told him what was going to befall.

He described with amazing accuracy the man's young wife in England. He saw her in a red-roofed house, surrounded by cedar trees, which my friend at once recognized as an old rectory, the home of his wife's girlhood.

Without faltering, the Arab spoke of death in that house and said a message was even then on its way telling of a life gone and a new life born.

Terribly upset, my friend questioned him, but could ascertain nothing except a repetition of the description of the house in which a fair-haired, newly-made mother lay dead, and in which a new-born baby wept.

When my friend returned to Khartoum, he received the telegram telling him of the sudden death of his young wife.

The child born to her lived. She had died in her father's house, the rectory the Arab had described with such amazing accuracy.

The owner of an old curio-shop came up one day from the North to see me, and brought what he declared was his most precious treasure, an enormous crystal.

It had belonged, so he declared, to Mary Seton, one of Mary, Queen of Scots' ladies-in-waiting, and possessed strange powers. He had had many offers for it, but he assured me that no price would tempt him, as he himself would sit for hours before it in the hope of seeing some vision. He was anxious to know my impression of the ball, which he placed on the cushion before me, but seemed very disappointed when I only saw some incidents of his own life.

He had been convinced that visions of its past owners would have appeared.

I tried several times, but could see nothing in any way connected with centuries gone by.

On another occasion when I was asked to look into a crystal ball belonging to a stranger, I was struck by the arresting vision which appeared in it.

The owner was a great hunting man, who a few years previously had married. The marriage had not been a success, and the rift in the matrimonial lute was already a subject of gossip.

It was a glorious June day when Mr. M—— came to see me, and asked me to read the crystal for him. He was a splendidly built man of about forty and appeared the picture of health. When I looked into the ball, I saw at first nothing but a cloud-shadowed space. Presently there shaped the outline of a landscape, and I saw fields and hedge-topped ditches. Next appeared forms moving rapidly, horses with pink-coated riders. It seemed a strange vision to see there on that sultry afternoon in town.

Again I peered into the glass. This time I saw the figure of a man, hanging over a horse's neck. . . . And I recognized the rider, whose eyes, glaring with the glassy fixedness of death, seemed to meet mine. Half unconsciously, I noticed that the horse he rode was a dapple-grey.

Then other visions filled the crystal, betraying the unhappiness of Mr. M——'s disillusioned married life with a girl whose heart was given elsewhere.

My client, who was watching me nervously, asked me to tell him what I had seen. I let him ask me twice before I could bring myself to answer him.

Then I told him that I had seen that he must not ride in any race unless he wished to lose his life. The vision had been a warning.

He seemed surprised, and confided to me that the doctors had warned him that his heart was in a bad condition and had forbidden all racing. He had quite given up riding in point-to-points.

"It's bad luck," he said. "I wanted to win a certain race this coming season."

Months later, by a strange hazard, I found myself staying in the same house with him. There was a cheery house-party in honour of the point-to-point meeting to be held a few miles away.

Amongst the guests were my sportsman visitor and his wife.

She was a pretty, fascinating creature, and was obviously carrying on a violent flirtation with an officer stationed in a neighbouring garrison. He was to ride her hunter on the following day in a red-coat race.

I shall never forget that following morning.

Round the course we walked with the shouts of the bookies and the cries of the cake and bun hawkers mingling with the laughter of the dense crowds, which, by motor, charabanc or donkey cart, had come for miles to the hunt meeting. Side by side on the muddy ditches aristocracy rubbed shoulders with tinkers and poachers, and the noisy cheerfulness was enhanced at intervals by the strains of a village band.

I turned to descend from a gate on which I had *climbed to watch the light-weight race, which had been* attended by much "grief," no fewer than three jockeys having parted with their mounts, when I came face to face with my hostess.

"Isn't it dreadful?" she cried, pointing excitedly to where men were carrying on a stretcher a rider apparently knocked out. "That is Captain R—,

and he was to have ridden Mrs. M——'s horse in the heavy-weight."

Later in the day I heard that Mr. M—— was to take the place of his rival and ride his wife's horse.

He had only done so, someone who had overheard them said, because she had taunted him with funking the banks. Her heart was set on winning the race, for she had backed her own horse heavily. I saw her hurrying towards the weighing-in tent, to speak to her husband before he went out.

Presently I saw him, a well-set figure reining in his rearing mount, with easy nonchalance.

I looked curiously at the horse, a beautiful weight-carrying dapple-grey. It seemed vaguely familiar.

The next moment I caught my breath. I had remembered where I had seen the animal before.

Heedless of everything save that memory alone, I elbowed my way frantically through the crowds in a wild endeavour to reach the rider in time, and to beg of him to heed the vision which with sickening vividness had arisen before me. But I was too late.

A few minutes later from a gorse-covered ditch I watched the start.

Never for a moment did I take my eyes from the dapple-grey, and as I saw him keep his place second from the leading horse, and noticed the easy horsemanship of his rider, my apprehension grew less, while my excitement was fanned by the wild, frenzied shouting of the bookies and the crowd.

"The roan leads. . . . No, the favourite leads. . . ."

A howl rose up as a horse and its rider came to grief.

"The favourite's down. . . . Now the grey's leading. . . ."

So they shouted, and still the dapple-grey galloped on, with a steadiness that showed his rider was reserving his best to the end.

Then the feverish tension spread over the field, and people rushed here and there, seeking better places from which to see the finish of a desperately near race.

Almost neck to neck two horses raced, a black and a dapple-grey.

The black's flanks heaved pitifully as his rider used spurs and whip without mercy, while leaning over his saddle the rider of the dapple-grey didn't lift his arm.

There was only one more jump—only a few yards left to reach the winning post.

Suddenly, the grey raced away from the black horse. The whole field cheered, realizing that the grey could "walk away" now and finish gloriously.

But I did not join the cheering. I felt sick with an increasing sensation of dread, as I watched, fascinated, the rider of the winning horse.

Surely, I told myself, that vision had held some other meaning. Surely this easily won race was not the signal for the Great Reaper's sickle!

A long-drawn cry almost like a wail swept over the crowded hillside. Lightly as a bird the dapple-grey had risen to the last bank. What had happened? Why had his rider suddenly pitched forward, and, swerving without apparent reason in his saddle, fallen head foremost from his stirrups?

Why, in the moment of his triumph, had he slackened his hold upon the reins, which now flapped loosely, while as if suddenly terrified, the dapple-grey galloped madly away?

I never moved. I could not. My limbs shook so

that I was unable to join the gesticulating, shrieking throng which rushed towards the last bank.

Motionless I sat there, my eyes riveted on the crumpled figure which willing hands were raising from the sodden field.

The rider had fallen and broken his neck, but none could explain the mystery of his fall. There had been no apparent cause for his sudden reeling from his saddle as the horse rose to make his last jump. But I knew that before the fall had broken his neck, the plucky man, who, because of a woman's gibes, had gone out to his doom, had seen death. Before his head had struck the stone-faced bank, his strained heart had ceased to beat.

Ever since that day I have never been able to watch any man on horseback take a jump, for before my eyes there always appears the vision of that white, strained, pink-coated horseman.

Often people ask me if, when I see any horror coming, I tell the person for whom I am looking into the crystal. I always warn my visitor. I warned Mr. M—— not to ride any race again and told him that if he did the consequences would be fatal. I did not tell him that he would necessarily be killed. He could have averted his end. There was no necessity for him to have died so soon. But I believe that he knew in his heart, when he rode past the starting-point, that he would never pass the winning post alive.

I have often seen the approaching shadow of danger, and, as I have just said, I have always endeavoured to persuade those interested to avoid certain risks.

When I read the crystal for Lord Northcliffe, I warned him of the strain which, if not slackened, would have dire consequences, and I foresaw for Lady Hulton

the shadow of Sir Edward Hulton's death. In various other instances I have been able to warn the persons themselves or their relatives, of certain dangers affecting the duration of their lives. In many cases the warning has been heeded and the dangers avoided.

A fact which always interests me intensely is the inexplicable fear certain people have of the crystal when they touch it. Sometimes the ball is as if it had suddenly changed to a mass of burning electricity. For instance, when Mrs. Fortescue, the wife of the well-known soldier, came to consult me, and had been given the crystal to hold, she startled me by springing up and literally flinging it out of her grasp, declaring that her hand was burnt. She showed me the palm of her left hand, and it certainly was red, as if burnt. When I picked up the crystal, I nearly dropped it myself. It was burning hot. Mrs. Fortescue was deeply impressed, for, some time before, the vision of her daughter's marriage revealed by the crystal, had been fulfilled to the very letter. But she experienced the greatest difficulty in holding the ball on account of its burning her.

I have met others also with whom this occurs. It happened the other day, when a very beautiful Cingalese lady flung my ball across the room, crying out that it had burnt her hand badly.

Later, when after some trouble she had held it for a moment, I looked into it and read the reflection of a sad story.

A Princess in her own right, she had met in Ceylon a Dutchman of good family and attractive personality. He had managed to induce her to believe his protestations of love, and she had done what few Eastern women do—she had fled her country to marry him. Now, in England,

she was faced with the awful truth. She was not his legal wife. Alone in London, she found herself deserted by the man who, tired of her beauty and unable to face his family's scorn for his *liaison* with a coloured woman, had left her to live as best she could, a veritable outcast.

Luckily for her, she possessed her own income, which, providentially, she had refused to make over to him, as he had wished her to do.

Another who, whenever she held a crystal, made it burn as with electricity, was the late Lady Muir Mackenzie, who herself always took an active interest in psychic research.

The reason for this phenomenon I have never heard satisfactorily explained.

"There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio . . ."

Even the sceptical agree to this. For example, my father's disbelief in psychic phenomena was shaken to its foundations by an incident which happened in his own province in India, and brought home to him and others the amazing unseen powers about us. Three young subalterns in his command had ridden some distance into the country one Christmas Eve, keen on procuring a site on which to erect a bungalow to use as a sort of shooting hut.

On the side of a hill they found what they thought would be an ideal spot. Near running water, and within easy distance of the jungle, it boasted the further attraction of a clump of trees close by, which promised shelter from the sun.

Tying their horses to the trees, the young men dismounted and began measuring operations.

As they did so, they were startled by the appearance

of a thin skeleton-like man who suddenly emerged from a hole, beside which they had noticed large stones. Holding up his hands, the Fakir salaamed low, and then in the name of Allah, asked them what they wanted. One of them told him they were measuring the place, as they wanted to build a bungalow on it.

The holy Hermit stared at them in horror.

Then he cried out that they could not build there ; the spot had been the precincts of a shrine. Rather contemptuously, they told him to leave them in peace to continue their task. The Fakir realizing that they meant to carry out their project, tore his matted beard and hair. Finally, he lifted his hand and cursed them with venomous solemnity.

He cursed them in turn, condemning them to die a violent death, on the first, second and third anniversaries of that Christmas Eve, respectively.

Rather amused than otherwise, the subalterns, who were all three new to India, rode back, and later, in the mess, my father heard the story told as a jest.

He at once forbade the building of the bungalow, and the three subs had a bad time, I heard, while they learnt that they must avoid treading upon the corns of holy men.

The following Christmas Eve, the subaltern who had been the first to be cursed by the Fakir was found dead, *in his own room, shot by his own hand*. Debt, and the fear of disgrace had forced him to find the quickest way out. People who had heard the story of the Fakir shook their heads. It was only the first, they said, who would pay toll.

The following Christmas Eve, as one of the other young officers was swimming in a tank, his companions

were horrified to hear him scream the dreaded word, "Crocodile !"

Before help could reach him, there came the gruesome snapping of huge jaws, betraying the unexpected presence of a man-eating crocodile.

The poor young fellow's death cast a shadow on the station, but the last surviving subaltern did not seem nervous for his own safety.

He did not seem anxious even when, a year later, he stood in the verandah on Christmas Eve and wished my mother good-night.

"It's close on midnight," he said, "so I think the old Fakir won't get me now. I'm safe this trip from his curse."

As he mounted his horse and cantered away across the compound, his merry laugh echoed through the quiet night.

Half-an-hour later, a terrified sentry came rushing to the house with tragic news. The Sahib had been found dead, only a few yards away from my father's house. A white cow had suddenly risen from a hedge of eucalyptus and in the moonlight had startled the horse, a high-spirited young Arab, which, swerving violently, had backed and thrown his rider. Crashing upon some jagged stones on the side of the hedge, the subaltern had struck his right temple.

Was it the fulfilment of that curse pronounced in the name of some avenging spirit for a sacrilege committed? Who knows?

But upon each Christmas Eve had gone forth, in toll, one young life, and to this day I can remember my mother, red-eyed and sobbing, coming into my nursery to ask me to pray for the dead boy's mother.

Another strange occurrence took place during the sojourn of a certain bishop in Madras.

He was a bosom friend of my father's, despite the fact that whereas the bishop's ambition lay in the making of converts, my father's endeavour was to let the natives follow their own religious bent.

During the whole of his stay in Madras, the bishop had made only three converts, and used to parade the bazaar with these proofs of his zeal.

One day, fired by an inexplicable impulse, he turned to his three followers, and pointing to a huge statue of Buddha, asked them if they really had turned their back upon all worship of the idol.

Each in turn answered devoutly in the affirmative.

"Then," the bishop said, "to show those around you your conviction, spit in the face of the idol."

Horrified, the first declined, salaaming respectfully. The second followed suit with manifold excuses, but the third braced himself up and stepped nearer. "I am not afraid," he said, and spat, to pitch forward dead at the idol's feet.

Of course the other two fled in terror from the horrified bishop to prostrate themselves in agonized penitence before their native priests.

The verdict at the *post-mortem* was to the effect that the dead man had suddenly succumbed to heart failure, brought on through defying all that birth and training had taught him to respect.

Whatever the reason, it was a terrible *faux pas*, and none regretted it more than the good-hearted, if over-zealous, bishop.

CHAPTER XXV

THEIR TROTH

“MIND your step” is a timely warning, which might be used in double harness with another—“Mind your hair.” This latter, frequently has been, to my knowledge, the means of betraying what was not meant to be dragged from obscurity.

An instance of this happened a little while ago, when a distinguished-looking and elegantly dressed woman of fifty, who gave her name as Mrs. Giles, came to consult me, carrying with care a small square box wrapped in paper.

Without any preamble, she told me she had come for my advice, in order to decide whether or not to institute divorce proceedings against her husband. They had been married for over thirty years, and she now suspected him strongly of infidelity. She was visibly distressed, and confided to me that in spite of her suspicions she still loved the man who was the father of her children. My crystal, she went on, was to tell her whether her fears were justified or not.

As I picked up the crystal, she untied the string of her parcel and showed me a cardboard box which once had held Dundee shortbread !

“My husband has been away for several nights,” she said, “and, on his return, I found—*these*.” She paused and, wrenching open the lid, produced with

mysterious solemnity a crumpled pair of rose and white pyjamas

"These long black hairs on the left sleeve," she went on, "are surely proof positive of my husband's infamy with some barmaid at the hotel"

She pointed with dramatic condemnation to the hairs in question.

"His hair is grey, so is *mine*" She pointed again to the suspicious sleeve "Let your crystal prove my husband's untruthfulness"

Tongue-tied for the moment, I stared from her livid face to the garments she held out

"Put your crystal here, on the hairs," she went on, "and tell me all the naked truth"

She spoke earnestly, innocent of the unconscious humour of her remark I turned away, struggling not to smile at the sight of this elegant, aristocratic woman, in her sables, peering with such intentness at a pair of pyjama trousers

Telling her that I did not need to put the crystal on the garments, I looked into its depths I was able to assure her that her fears were groundless She eyed me keenly

"Last month," she objected, "I found several short fair"—her lips set tightly—"shingled hairs—on his pyjama collar"

I shrugged my shoulders, mentally marvelling how men could be so careless Then, peering into the crystal again, I once more informed the much-perturbed lady that her husband was not so erring as she had feared

She seemed somewhat comforted, but as she rose to bid me good-bye, she pushed the rose and white garments back into the box and eyed me determinedly

"I will leave these," she said, "and will esteem it a favour if you will kindly, when you are alone, concentrate upon the pyjamas." Her face flushed furiously. "And those hairs."

Then, heedless of my reluctance to let the small untied box remain, she swept majestically from the room.

A few moments later, I was summoned away, and for the moment forgot the box and its contents.

A gentleman had begged that I would grant him a few minutes' interview. I glanced at his card—Sir Robert G——. My secretary said he seemed terribly anxious to see me, and he was ushered into my room.

He was a tall, well-preserved man of over fifty, but his good-natured face was clouded with evident anxiety.

"Miss Montague," he began, "I have come to you on a strange errand." He paused, fidgeted with his eyeglass, and cleared his throat. "I have found out through a maid that my wife intends visiting you, under the name of Mrs. Giles. She suspects me of unfaithfulness, and I want to assure you before you see her, that she is quite wrong."

I suppressed a start, and glanced furtively at the small square box, marked "Dundee Shortbread," which, bereft of its wrappings, stood on the table, where my last visitor had left it.

The tall man swung his eyeglass backwards and forwards dramatically.

"I hope you will do your best if she comes," he went on, "to assure her that her suspicions are entirely——"

He stopped short with an exclamation, as, tested beyond endurance, the thin cord holding his eyeglass snapped, and the monocle jerked forward. The man grabbed at it, and in doing so cannoned rather heavily

against the table. There was a sound of photograph frames overturning, and then I found myself gaping in speechless dismay at my visitor's feet. Right across them sprawled a pair of white and rose pyjamas ! Before he could recover from his surprise, I darted forward, and snatching up the garments, pushed them and the box from which, in the collision, they had escaped, out of sight, beneath the divan.

Sir Robert G—— stared at me open-mouthed.

"You needn't deny it——" He bit his lips. "She has already been here." He dragged the pyjamas from their hiding-place and examined them. "I recognize the d——d laundry mark !"

Sir Robert G—— and "Mrs. Giles" still live together in harmony. She does not know that he saw those pink and white pyjamas with their "Lady Godiva-like threads," in the seclusion of my consultation room !

"Love makes the world go round," and I have found in my experiences as a clairvoyante, working for people of all classes and creeds and most nationalities, that the strongest and most frequent motive of the men and women who wish to consult me, is—love.

I say "most nationalities," for I have looked into my crystal for white and coloured people, to find in the generality of cases *une grande passion* playing an all-important part, no matter whether the one for whom I have gazed lived in a palace or in a tenement house.

But there are exceptions which prove most rules, and I long ago discovered that among the farming classes in the South of Ireland, the word "love" has no meaning.

It certainly never enters into any marriage contract. Live stock such as cows, pigs and poultry, together with

cash, are the sole considerations. I have known scores of farmers who have "made" or "broken" their marriage, solely on account of cattle.

One woman begged me to look into the crystal for her, as she was about to become a bride. When I did so, and told her I saw postponed marriage, she exclaimed, "Shure thin that's because my father swears my young man's mother must be after making over to me all her hins."

A week later the woman came to inform me that her father, a few days before the appointed wedding-day, had broken off the match, because her prospective mother-in-law had refused to waive all claim to the poultry she had reared in favour of her son's intended bride. The "poultry" consisted, by the way, of about two dozen hens and a barn-door cock.

Often, often, I have heard of matches where men and women have taken each other "for better or worse" simply on considerations of cattle, but only once did I come face to face with a man who took his wife because she possessed a mattress !

The incident happened in Limerick. A yokel, who possessed a tiny farm, came to see a friend of mine, a distinguished landowner, a relative of the late Sir William Butler.

"Plaze yer honour," he exclaimed, "Oi'm afther coming to ask yer advice." Here he paused, grew red in the face, and then went on :

"It's this way, yer Honour, Oi'm getting married this Shrove, but Oi'm bothered which girl to take. One what my mother is afther thinking the best, have fifty pounds in the bank, sivin cows and a breeding sow, and the other only forty pounds, five cows and three

pigs, with some nice hineens ; but"—he fidgeted awkwardly with his cap and then blurted out, "shure yer honour, an hasn't she a feather bed !"

"Better take the feather bed," said my friend, after a moment's reflection.

The future bridegroom nodded his none too well-combed head, "Begob thin, yer Honour, an Oi will." And he did. The woman did not matter. The chattels were all he wanted.

In another instance, I was present at an astounding incident in connection with "holy matrimony," which took place in a church in the South of Ireland. A countryman was to be married. His friends had all hied to the church to witness the ceremony before the altar.

Up the aisle the bridegroom came, and the assembled onlookers gasped aloud, to see, proudly leaning, simpering on his arm, the bride-elect's most hated rival !

Quite unabashed, they stood before the rails. The priest demanded where was the lawful bride, and the fond bridegroom glared defiantly.

"Shure Oi'm afther changing my moind, since the day before yesterday," he answered. "And Oi'm going to be afther marrying this one instead."

The priest argued that he could not marry the woman beside him in such a way.

"Shure thin," roared the bridegroom, "why not, for begorrah an' this one will do just as well."

The heated argument was curtailed by the arrival of the real bride, all "hot and bothered," who, in her wedding finery, nearly scratched out her rival's eyes, and triumphed by making the unwilling bridegroom plight his troth.

The secret of his sudden change of passion was

disclosed, when he confided aggrievedly to the onlookers, that the woman upon whom he had set his second choice had as "foine a breeding mare as he had clapped eyes on," whereas the only steed possessed by the bride foisted upon him now for life, was, he had discovered through the secret services of a vet, an aged cart-horse suffering from unsuspected staggers !

Perhaps more astounding still to civilized minds is the case, for which also I can vouch, of a farmer who went to the church to marry his bride, and in the very church-yard itself fell out with his prospective father-in-law over the question of a few pounds, of which he was short in the marriage bargain.

The prospective father-in-law had stipulated that he must produce a receipt for so much deposit in the bank. The deposit lacked five pounds of the stipulated sum ! So the bride was marched away while, depressed at visions of "no porter," the thirsty onlookers groaned aloud.

At this point, a man rushed excitedly up to the bridegroom. He knew, he declared, a fine girl who would take the retiring bride's place. Her father was the owner of some "grand" dairy cattle, and she was his only child.

Away on a side-car jaunted the bridegroom's friend at breakneck speed, to find the unsuspecting damsel, thinning turnips in a field.

Gasping for breath, he poured into her astonished ears the story and proposal, "Would ye come back and marry him instead ?"

Would she ? Off she went on the jaunting car, in her field attire, to plight her troth with a man she had only seen once !

In striking contrast is the following drama, staged, in part at least, in this country, where love is not evicted from the marriage contract.

In a tiny inn where I was staying in Hampshire, the chambermaid, a sweet-faced, sad-eyed girl who had been born and bred in the village, came timidly to my room, and asked if it was possible that I would look into the crystal for her?

I assented gladly, but as I looked into the ball, I felt a sensation of horror and pity.

I saw the vision of a young man in uniform, his face distorted, his eyes wild with the agony of physical torment. Round him were grouped those who were not fit to be called men. Slowly I described a little of the scene, and even as a cry burst from her, the vision faded and there appeared in its place the reflection of a gaunt, haggard face, the face of a man prematurely aged. I recognized it as that of the man I had seen with his brutal torturers. But, now his eyes were wide and dull, and devoid of reason. His poor twisted mouth told the same ghastly story.

Not knowing what to tell the girl, who was now weeping, I said that I saw a young man, who appeared ill—very ill.

She did not answer, and next moment I saw her own figure slowly forming in the crystal. Her arms were outstretched to the man with the poor twisted mouth, and, as I looked, a light of understanding crept into his staring eyes. I told her I saw her with a young man who had been ill but would get better soon.

With a cry that frightened me, she sprang towards me, "Oh! tell me that again," she sobbed, "tell me that again. That he will get better!"

She struggled with her sobs. "They tell me I should not wait for him. They say he will be mad—for life."

Then she told me the pitiful story, of the gallant young soldier, who, after facing the horrors of "No Man's Land," in France, had had to face far worse horrors.

In Ireland, during the rebellion, he had been captured by Sinn Feiners, and had been tortured to make him turn traitor. But they could not unseal his lips. Their bodily torture did not break his faithfulness. They only broke his reason, the reason of a lad—true till a far worse thing than death. A gibbering idiot, he was rescued and brought home to the girl who had waited for him—his bride to be.

"I love him so." Rocking herself to and fro, she sat with her head buried in her hands. "Oh! I cannot give him up, I love him so."

Then, as, stirred to my innermost soul, I bent beside her, she raised her face.

"You have told me he will get better. He will get better."

I knew the light of reason would come back to the poor clouded eyes.

The girl fell on her knees beside me.

"I can bear it now," she said, "I don't mind how long I wait. I will never give him up."

Thank God, she did not have long to wait.

Back from the asylum at last he came, that gallant lad, to her arms. Only the twisting of his lips betrayed the memory of the hell he had passed through. Only the shadow in his frank grey eyes testified to that sear which could never be obliterated or forgotten.

A farmer's son, a farmer's daughter, both from the heart of Sussex, those two went to God's altar.

Next to the affairs of the heart, the eternal problem of money is answerable for the greater number of those who seek crystal or other psychic visions.

But when I am asked what strikes me most of all with regard to my psychic work, I can honestly say that it is the amazing amount of good in one's fellow men.

Far from disillusioning one with human nature, my crystal visions often make me marvel at the patience and goodness that lie where one would least suspect them.

A rather telling example of this happened not very long ago. A man came to ask me for a crystal reading, and I soon discovered that his motive related to a sum of money that he had more or less lost. It meant a great deal to him. There was sickness in his home, and extra expenses were heavy.

In the crystal came the vision of a woman weeping, while a group of children clung around her.

When I described the vision, the man nodded.

"That's the cause of my trouble," he said. "I was sent to turn her out. She hadn't paid her rent, and the brokers were in." He paused and looked away from me. "Her husband was wounded at Ypres." I saw his face twitch. "My son was killed there." He stopped short.

"You paid the money," I said, as I still gazed into the ball.

"She thought she would be able to repay me," he commented. "I couldn't turn her out somehow; I gave her cash, and helped her, and her husband, to start a little business. They're getting on all right now, but I want the money back at once, to-day."

He looked at me wistfully. "Do you see any chance of getting it back?"

I did—but not at once. And the man beside me had to sell many little treasures to make up for the sum lent in memory of a little mound in the vicinity of Ypres.

But he will get repaid.

Already bit by bit the money is filtering back, as all good, in time, filters back, a thousandfold, to the giver, and as all bread cast upon the waters is found after many days.

And may I in conclusion say one word to those who so often offer me sympathy because of the fatiguing strenuousness of my life? Although I am always more or less at the beck and call of my fellow creatures, whether close at hand or in the uttermost parts of the earth, I can truthfully declare that I love my life. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," and I would not barter for any existence of ease and leisure that gift of Second Sight which binds me so closely to my fellow men and women.

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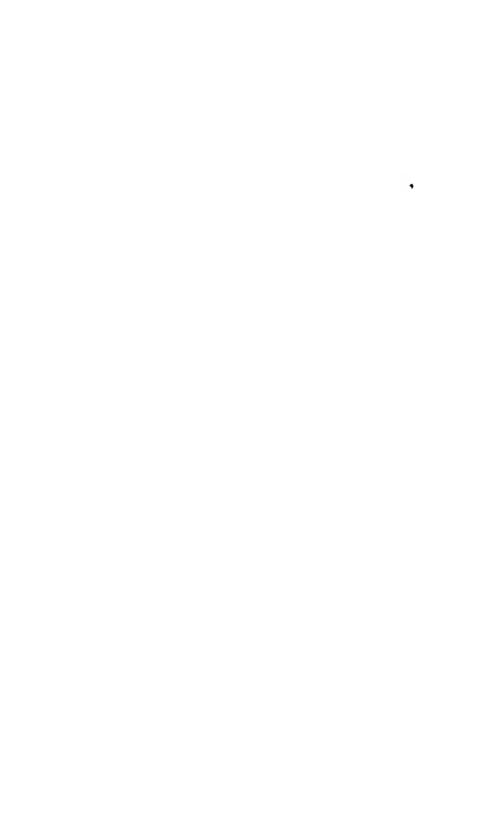
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MISS MONTAGUE is the daughter of an English general. Her powers of divination have earned her a world-wide reputation, they were first discovered at the age of four, and cultivated by her native nurse in India. Her help has been sought by Royalty, Eastern Potentates, Peers and Peeresses, brilliant soldiers and sailors, and men and women of all professions

Two weeks before his death, Lord Kitchener wrote regarding some information she had given him. Sir Evelyn Wood paid the following tribute to her powers · ‘ Every single thing you foretold seven years ago has been fulfilled ’ ; and Sir William Barrett, F.R.S, the late psychic authority, publicly testified to her wonderful crystal vision and second sight.